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The Fishmans

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H. W. KATZ



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Translated from the German by Maurice Samuel

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DIE FISCHMANN'S

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THE FISHMANS

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“*Tant qu’il y aura sur la terre ignorance et misère,
des livres de la nature de celui-ci ne pourront pas
être inutiles.*”

“As long as there is ignorance and misery in the
world, books of this kind cannot be useless.”

—VICTOR HUGO, *Les Misérables*.

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THE FISHMANS

On a Ladder-Wagon

RIGHT in the midst of my childhood there came a day on which my conscious life began. Even now the echo of that day rings in my heart like a shattering drum-beat. When I think back, my throat grows hot, I must swallow down a dryness, and a strange feeling of guilt rises in me, for no reason that I can think of. Perhaps it is because now I tell myself that such a day demands a special courage of every man, while at that time I did not know, could not have known, what that is: courage. For I was only seven years old.

So ended my first childhood, and so began my life: I was fleeing.

I relive even now, after more than twenty years, every phase of that memorable day.

I crouched in a shaky ladder-wagon, which creaked and groaned in every separate part and which was chock-full of sacks and bundles. With me, jammed close against me and one another, sat my mother, my younger brother, my grandparents, and two strangers with long beards and black sheepskin caps. The wagoner, a peasant in hunting-jacket and clay-colored trousers stuck into filthy boots, walked along, making smacking noises with his lips and calling: "Huh-huh!"

It must have been very early in the morning, for I remember

that the surrounding world had to emerge laboriously from its covering of darkness. I had been carried sleeping into the wagon, and I watched how the heavy mist, which lay close about us, dissolved by degrees. The wheels of our conveyance rattled and crunched as if with cold and weariness.

I knew that the last of the soldiers had evacuated the village the night before. There the streets had lain, empty and dead. So we had set forth, leaving behind us shattered window-panes, a destroyed bridge, and an abandoned house of worship. The two bearded strangers cowering with us on the floor of the wagon—it consisted of a couple of loose, jumping planks—were bewailing some woman or other, a relative of theirs, who had refused to come along. It is as if the whole thing had happened only yesterday, for I still hear the querulous voices of these two strange men near me speaking about her who had been left behind.

"The woman's mad. She wouldn't come along because she's got sick legs. What sense was there in staying there, ha? Who is there to look after? What is there to look after? The empty village? The cemetery?"

All this did not come out in a single breath. There were intervals of raging silence between these furious, shrill, staccato observations, which were delivered in Yiddish. For we were Jews, very young and very old Jews, and all of us in flight. Only the peasant, the owner of the vehicle, was no Jew.

"Mister Peasant," said my grandfather, almost tenderly, in a mixture of Polish and Ruthenian, "do you think your horse can do it? Isn't it too far to the next town? And, Mister Peasant, won't they perhaps catch up with us on the road? And what do you think, if they do catch up with us, God forbid, what do you think will happen to us, eh? Will they wring our necks—God forbid—tell us!"

Instead of answering, the peasant only smacked his lips more loudly, more scornfully, more treacherously than before. He also let his whip whistle through the air, then contemptuously blew out the lamp which dangled from the rolling wagon.

"Mister Peasant," my grandfather began again, still more tenderly, more anxiously, "Mister Peasant, what do you think? . . ."

"Why do you ask such childish questions?" my grandmother interrupted angrily; she spoke in Yiddish without embarrassment. "Can't you see he's a Jew-hater? May his tongue rot in his mouth, and both his hands—but not before we've got to the end of the journey," she added cautiously.

And still the two strangers gesticulated with head and hands, querulous, venomous, mean, harsh.

"Have you ever heard the like of it? She wouldn't come along because she has sick legs! . . . The woman's mad!"

Writing down these words, I live again through those hours on the jolting ladder-wagon. Once again I am the little boy stowed away among the sacks and quilts, and once again I see, in front of us and behind, other wagons like ours, many others, rolling along, groaning and creaking, drawn for the most part by old mules. Shivering, I see the mist fleeing, Jews fleeing, and about us the autumn wind raises the dust on the endless road.

I am a refugee. At the age of seven.

It is with this that my life actually begins.

Strody on the River Stryj

I was as young as that when I left the land in which I came into the world. And yet when I close my eyes I can see everything there as if I had lived a hundred years and more in the place.

The plains were illimitable, the spring was short, the manure steamed in the furrows, sour-smelling cow-droppings.

The summer was dry and withered, and I heard dull detonations. It thundered often, and the lightning struck often, for lightning-rods were as little known as electricity, gas, or the movies. But there was the sharp, penetrating odor of wheat and oats. And the wide-lying, deep-dunged fields competed with the stink of fish and onions and the beggarly poverty of the small villages.

Once there were many townlets in this land. The roads that led into them were rough, narrow, pitted strips. When the rains were heavy, as they often were in the fall, the landscape took on the aspect of a clayey morass. The holes were filled with a thick, stinking putrescence.

I did not know it then, but I have learned since that in addition to these unimproved roads there were a few good ones, which in this windy corner of Europe were like fine carpets kept painfully clean in the midst of an unkempt stable. These

wide roads, with their firm gray surfaces, had not been put there out of love for the Poles and Ruthenians, and certainly not for the Jews. The sole reason for their existence was of a military, technical order. Their lines stretched, straight as the flight of an arrow, toward the east. There lay the vast and mighty empire of the Tsars, the dreaded Russian bear.

Nor far from the frontier there was, many years before the World War, the village or townlet of Strody. That is where I was born. I have spent many an hour wondering whether my life would have taken another turn if Strody had not been my birthplace. Today I am of the belief that it is all one where I, the Jew, came into the world. The fact that I was born a Jew was the more decisive factor in my life. For it is not only the Jews of Strody who are persecuted.

Everything in these villages was yellowish and spotted: the days, the walls of the houses, the people. I was affected most strangely by the coming and going of the night, and even today I start with fear when I think of the nights in Strody, those nights that descended like dark mysteries on the crooked streets and transformed the faces of the people into pallid masks.

Perhaps more terrifying still was the extinction of the darkness. I have seen this passage from night to day several times, always when I lay sick in bed, staring frightened through the curtainless windows. I was often sick as a child. In time the dark retreating silence took on in my imagination the fearsome likeness of a cripple limping away and disappearing without a trace among the hard clods of the frozen furrows. The sky, moreover, always hung unevenly over the slightly crooked plain on which lay this little townlet of Strody, Strody on the river Stryj.

Market days brought some variety into its life. The peasants and their wives came in from far and wide. The peasant women

squatted right in the middle of the wide market-place on the naked, dusty earth. In those days the peasant women of that vicinity generally wore three skirts in addition to a woolen petticoat. Concerning their padded drawers of thick fustian perhaps the less said the better. In any case, they never felt the coldness of the earth. They sat gnawing on boiled yellow corn-cobs. By way of a change they sometimes chewed flat dried sun-flower seeds, smelling powerfully of oil. Their knotted bundles lay close by them. Their motley flowered headcloths made splashes of bright color.

The husbands of these squatting peasant women stood by their little horses or leaned against their wagons and gazed at the surrounding world in brooding silence. When a Jew came by, one who wanted neither to buy nor sell, one who only passed that way, there was a treacherous hissing and cursing:

"Hey, Jew, haven't you spit your life out yet?"

"Not yet, Mister Peasant," the Jew would say. He would laugh, embarrassed. He would make a sort of obeisance. A deep one.

"Goddamn filthy dog!" the peasant women would snarl, and shoot a mouthful of wet corn kernels after the Jew.

He, hurrying on, would think: "Let them curse all they want. The main thing is it shouldn't come to blows. As long as Kaiser Franz Josef is still alive in Vienna . . ."

The peasants would grunt hatefully: "He slinks by like a wolf, with his tail between his legs!"

"Pfu-u-h!"

Their spittle mingles with the filth that covers the market-place.

Market day was twice a week. Then the peasants and the Jews came together. Then the peasant spat and the Jew made

his obeisance. The Jews became accustomed to the peasants' spitting, the peasants to the Jews' nervous laughter, their uneasy, insecure laughter. The Jew never knew when this dangerous peasant of his would take it into his head to give a demonstration with his fists. Keeping his silence, he learned the art of swallowing insults. Many a Jew really had to hold fast to his distressed heart to keep it from jumping out of his throat. One acquired a terrified look, another was shaken from head to foot all his life long by an incurable shock.

Most of the Jews learned how to maintain the indifferent features of a bystander when they got a boot in the behind. How to smile even when the heart was bleeding. How to laugh when the blood boiled and the pulses hammered.

Every Jew in Strody had acquired some sort of quirk, for it is impossible to live in such a place without paying the price. Some were haunted by fantastic and crazy ideas. They dreamed that at least their children would some day find life better.

Malka, clever Malka, dreamed this dream for her son Yossel. This Malka was my grandmother, her son Yossel was my father. There were many dreamers in Strody. There were many Malkas and many Yossels.

Many stories were told me of the life of my grandfather Leib Fishman, my grandmother Malka, and my father Yossel in the hamlet of Strody. Some were touching to listen to, some were incredibly beautiful, some were just as brutal and mean, so that you could not help crying, and some, again, were so jolly that they made you roar, but most were a mixture of all these elements; and there was not one that struck me as improbable, or else I would not have written it down.

Most of these stories I heard when I was a child. To wit, when I went to bed early and my mother, "as reward," described

the world in and about Strody to me and my brother, while she rubbed our frozen feet with an anti-frost unguent. Or afternoons, when she was sewing and wanted us near her, for she may have forefelt that she was going to die soon. More than once she let slip an illuminating detail when she scolded us. But a great deal I gathered much later from my father, who was, however, reluctant to "make an exhibition of his life," as he put it. He spoke of himself only when his heart overflowed with bitterness, and I confess here that I trembled with joy when this took place, for otherwise he could hardly be moved to narrative or even to speech. Much I also read in letters that my mother wrote or received and which I looked through a long time after her death. Thus arose the story of my coming into the world, to which my imagination has contributed part of the form but by no means any of the substance. For the story of the Jews of Strody was lively enough of itself.

My grandfather, Leib Fishman, was not a man of property; he had neither woods nor servants nor herds. So I am denied the privilege of opening the story by bragging of the splendors of my ancestry—the kind of opening that never makes it quite clear whether the far-flung possessions of the opulent grandparents came into the family via the father's or the mother's side. Leib Fishman was just a plain innkeeper, the *haulabos* of a little hostelry in Strody. But he was not poor. The house of the Fishmans could, indeed, be described as well-to-do. In any case, I did not become acquainted with "poverty" in the early years of my life. It was only much later that I was to learn at first hand what it felt like to be hungry and ragged. But in Strody we had many things: a house, a yard, chickens, goats, a garden, plowland, the inn. Very definitely we never suffered want, but there is no ground for describing this sufficiency

as opulence. The Fishmans were, as far as I could understand, universally respected. If a *magid*, a wandering preacher, visited Strody, it was with us he stayed. Outside, the horses that pulled his wagon pawed in the mud or the snow, according to the time of the year. The wagoner sat in the inn and drank brandy, but the high guest sat with us at table, eating the daintiest portions of an unusually generous meal. Before he went away again he blessed us children, for which we had to kiss his hand, and likewise breathed a prayer into a few perforated coins which our radiant mother then hung about our necks as talismans.

But wait! My imagination is outrunning my story. These Fishmans of whom I am speaking were, then, Galician village Jews who all week long, from the close of every Sabbath to every Friday afternoon, sold fresh herrings, brandy, pickled cucumbers, and boiling hot tea (with lemon) to Jews, Poles, and Ruthenians; besides which they had four rooms to let, one of them with a balcony and curtains on the balcony door-window. In all of Strody there was only one balcony, and that was the one in my grandfather's house. So after all I did have "something" to brag about.

A year before my birth the following came to pass:

Leib Fishman was all alone in the inn, for it was already late evening; and only the oil lamp was burning above the bar. It is impossible now to discover with any degree of exactitude what he was doing at the moment, but he lives in my memory as the "man behind the counter," who with philosophic calm and objective concentration annihilated every day the tails of several herrings, and quenched his subsequent thirst with a "thimbleful" (that was his name for a glass when *he* did the drinking). Quite certainly he did the same thing on the evening in question, then wiped his fingers, odorous of herring and

schnapps, on his coat, which was almost as long as a black mantle and glistened like a waxed floor.

There came a belated guest who must have been lured toward the inn by the shining of the lonely light. He was a most extraordinary guest, for he stumbled into the inn in a very queer manner. He did not, as the custom is and was, present himself front side first, that is, advancing, in order, his face, his chest, and his stomach; he came in stiffly and of a piece, as if on stilts, shoving squarely through the door on widespread legs.

A brief and extremely businesslike conversation developed between the guest and my grandfather.

"Jew, your Strody is a lousy dead hole!" the guest said abusively.

"Mister Peasant, what you say is probably true," said old Leib Fishman, cunningly.

"If it weren't for Marishka, your whore . . ."

"Mister Peasant, what you say is certainly true."

The guest deposited his two hundredweight before a table.

"Jew, bring me slivovitz, a whole bottle, and fast."

"Certainly, sir," said old Leib, quick and courteous.

Muttering to himself, the guest dipped his whiskers into the circle of the glass.

"Marishka's mouth," he grumbled, "is nicer. And what she's got down below is a lot nicer than that."

"What you say is probably true."

At his fourth glass the sprawling man asked: "Anybody got any herring-barrels? I need one. For the count himself. Hey, you, who can you send me to?"

"Go to Rivkah Singer, she stands in the market-place all day long," said Leib. "She's a poor woman, a hard-working woman, her husband is very sick—it's his lungs—we've got to help her."

At the eighth glass the guest growled: "Has she really got a herring-barrel, that Marishka? Where does she hide it, the swine, the little whore? . . ."

"Her name is Rivkah Singer," said Leib, and put the bottle away. "I know she's got what you're looking for."

The guest had been drinking not out of ordinary brandy-glasses, but out of tea-glasses. He began to protest at the big oil lamp with the green shade.

"Hey, Moon, what are you looking at me like that for?"

There Marishka was, lying on the table. In a herring-barrel. Naked. With five gulden in her hand.

"Marishka, darling little herring-barrel, come to me, Marish . . ."

Old Leib closed the door behind him.

It was from this guest that Yossel Fishman, Leib's son, got such a frightful beating the next day in the market-place of Strody that he had to stay in bed several days. From that time, likewise, my father has had to wear glasses.

This beating, the grounds therefor, the contributors and witnesses thereto, the consequences thereof—it is all so authentically Strody that I must tell the story. Much of it I gathered only recently in Paris, where I met a man who had once lived in Strody, namely, the son of the doctor who had practiced there, Nachum Spiegel, an acquaintance of the Fishmans. This son, a doctor like his father, is night watchman in a big Paris jewelry business, and during the day gives music lessons—when he can find the pupils.

That strange guest to the Fishman inn was Yanek, the game-keeper of Count R., who was a real count and who owned wide stretches of field and forest near the Russian border.

I see this Yanek quite clearly in front of me, I feel him almost bodily. And the longer I conjure him up, the swifter disappear the walls of my room, the few pieces of furniture, the books, the lamp, the ink, the scratching of the pen—I am on the road that leads into Strody.

Yanek the Gamekeeper

IT was late afternoon, and the shadows were already gathering far off at the meeting-place of earth and sky, when Yanek emerged from the woods. He had a long road in front of him. It was a good hour's walk and more. All alone he trundled along, he spoke into the emptiness, he whistled and sang. At first it was fun to put all his effort into it, to go at it like a lunatic, to sit down winded, to glide silently through the bushes, and make up for lost time. But he soon tired of this harmless game, and his song took a higher pitch, became a jocosely aggressive bellowing.

Beyond the dark stretch of earth lay Strody, the goal of his irresistible advance. The trees to right and left kept pace with him. The sky too put out stars to accompany him. For his benefit the wind veered round. Even the moon, the good old moon, marched along with him. Hoih! The moon went marching with Yanek the merry-maker, Yanek the strong! With Yanek, who has the thighs of a bear! With Yanek, who can throw a stone a hundred yards and hit the mark at sixty every time! With Yanek, the sliest of them all, Yanek, the merriest, cleverest, strongest of the count's gamekeepers. With Yanek, who at every fifty paces began the same shattering song, louder than

the wind in the branches and bushes, louder than the furious baying of dogs that greeted him from the villages:

"Listen, little dove of mine, let me in! It's me, it's Yanek, your man! Listen, little dove of mine, make it softly, sweetly! Or else, little darling, your hu-usband will come!"

Dogs were in the service of Count R., so was gamekeeper Yanek. A sweating dog could run miles, panting hoarsely, tongue hanging out, when it sniffed red meat in the windy air. When a Yanek had been a long time without a woman, his shanks became impatient and damp, and he too ran for miles. For in the woods you may find berries and trees and snakes, but no women grow in the woods, damn it!

He wanted to be in Strody once again, this Yanek, up there on the road that leads to the river, where he could hear the giggling girls and see them, young and wet-skinned, laughing up from the water! He had to lie again on a warm woman-body, on hefty Marishka, who has a big clientele and who, everyone says, has saved up a lot of money, the cow, and who today is as rich as the count himself! Soon he would be with her, in her house, which stands right at the entrance to the village, on the right side—soon . . . !

"Listen, little dove of mine, let me in!" he bellowed hoarsely. The woods echoed a sibilant accompaniment. In one of his sweating hands, which were wide as coal-shovels, he held a massive stick, a new one. By God, the marching and the singing had made him hot! He ripped open the thick sheepskin coat! The three sticky vests! The wet shirt!

"Let me in!" he howled. The stamping feet dug holes in the road (which was no road); they advanced like blind, shapeless masts. Above them rocked a bull of a man, heavy, broadshouldered, a fighting cock, a killer, by the Lord! "It's me, it's Yanek, your hu-u-u-sband!"

The cool wind marched along with him, the dark wood tried to sing along with him, but the lungs were too powerful, the lungs of Yanek. Half in humility, half in spitefulness, he sent his call shattering against the night sky. "Let me in!" The moon hid quickly behind a cloud when it saw the red-haired chest and the muscular collarbone. Pallid with envy it glimpsed far below that mighty body as it stalked, trumpeting, on to Strody and Marishka.

At last Yanek stood before the house, which he had almost overshot. This house of Marishka's was a low hut, with no upstairs. The whitewashed walls glimmered sweetly in the darkness. The deep overhanging straw roof glittered silver in the moonlight. It bowed before Yanek like the backbone of a slave before the count. Which was only proper.

Yanek was now the count. So he stood there, leaning on his massive stick. Frowning and listening, he waited a few minutes. Meanwhile he sweated like a stewing pig, like a pig stewing in a caldron. He blew, he gasped, he panted. He drew the air down in thick, long, fierce drafts. Like one of those crazy, new-fangled threshing-machines that Stanislas was telling him about a little while back. Real machines that pant like human beings, ho! ho! A hundred times as big as a Yanek, Stanislas said. And can work a hundred times as much, he said, the big-mouth! That's a good joke, that is! He's a funny lad, that Stanislas is! A machine to do threshing! And what are we going to do with our serfs, Mister Stanislas, eh? And with our threshing-flails, eh? Next thing he'll come and tell us about a machine for growing things, ho! ho! He's just a bit cracked, that Stanislas, that's what he is.

The jocular "count" advanced commandingly on the door, the dark, bolted door. He smote the smeared boards with his stick.

"Bang! Bang—!"

Nothing stirred.

The moon stood still with curiosity, and held its breath.

The lungs of the wind had become weak, weak, like those of a little child.

The road glimmered round the corner, and far away the hill whispered, but it sounded as though someone were tittering.

Now the listening Yanek ceased to be the mighty count. He lifted up his fists.

"Marishka," he whispered. "Marishka!"

A tender whispering it was. His voice was as powerful as the storm that comes raging from the eastern steppes.

At last a door inside banged, a torrent of curses rolled through the little hut, loud laughter answered, fat and caressing. Then a second door flew open.

Biff! Yanek sprawled back, the second door was the one in front of him.

"Marishka!" gurgled Yanek, hotly.

"What sort of new game is this?" she hissed. "In the middle of the night! What's wrong?"

"I need a herring-barrel," stammered Yanek, suddenly intimidated and tearful, the big, strong Yanek. "A barrel for the count, in the market-place in Strody . . ."

"Is this the market-place?" snapped Marishka and tried to slam the door to. "I've got no barrels to sell."

Quick as a lightning flash Yanek had thrust his foot into the door.

"But I want to come in to you first, little honey tree!"

"Have you any money?"

Yanek sighed. "Over five gulden, saved it up a long time, all for you, for this night . . ."

"Hey, what's the matter out there? Shall I come and get you?" a man's voice shouted from inside.

Marishka doubled up with laughter. "I'm coming! I'll be there right away!"

Yanek listened idiotically, glared idiotically. Marishka consoled him with a smile. "Come back in two hours."

She pressed herself to him, her knee rose against him. Loud were Yanek's sighs afterwards: "She had nothing on but a mantle, a thin mantle, that's all. Oh, the cunning devil!"

"Kiss me, you big lummo, but quick, I've got no time now."

Yanek bent helplessly over and smeared a wet kiss over the thick lips. A laugh shot out of Marishka. Yanek's mustache, long and dense, covered half her face; the hairs were firm and ticklish.

"Quick, the money," tittered Marishka. "And come back, don't forget, in two hours."

With straddling legs Yanek trundled through the midnight streets. A wind played with the red hair on his chest, and in his veins the blood sang.

"Two hours more and I'll be lying in bed with my fat girl," his blood sang. "Two whole days and two whole nights I'll stay there with her! She's going to see something! Making me wait! Well, well, I'm going to show her who Yanek is! I'm going to show her . . ." What else his blood sang remains better untold, we've heard enough.

He went up the road that led to the river, but there were no tittering girls with young and wet bodies. The girls were long since sunk in deep slumber. "What a lousy dead hole this Strody is! If not for Marishka . . ."

A light still burning in Leib Fishman's inn. Yanek stumbled in.

What took place in the inn we already know, so let us wait till Yanek comes out again. It won't take long. Eight glasses—no "thimblefuls" this time—are not an extraordinary feat for a Yanek. His kind can swill brandy just as ordinary people swallow water—up to a certain point. We shall see in a minute where this point lies. . . .

Out in the fresh air Yanek became sober again.

"And what's more, I'm going to have her for nothing, she's already been paid," he confided to the sleeping streets. And joy seemed to waft him toward Marishka.

But she didn't open the door. First it was the stick that hammered, then the massive fists. There was a sound as of thunder, and no weak thunder, either, that's the kind of fist a Yanek has. But the door remained silent just the same.

Yanek yelled and bellowed: "You goddamn swine! I'll drag your naked carcass through the villages."

Yanek whispered: "Listen, little dove of mine, let me in."

It was a real whisper this time, just a simple whisper, without any melody.

But the door remained silent. Nothing helped. The night passed mockingly over the house. The garden was odorous with onions. Stale, watery.

"Who's that dares to laugh?"

(It's only a dog, Mister Yanek; he's baying, not laughing.)

The house was dead. The door remained silent. Yanek sat him down. In the odorous garden. To think things out.

Something swam heavily in his hot brain. That he had paid out the five gulden. That he was sitting here empty-handed, without the gulden, without the woman. That he was going to do something tremendous. But what? What? What was the best thing to do?

"Squeeze a woman like that to death, with my fists, like a rotten pear . . .

"Or trample her to death with my boots, my big, heavy leather ones, like a forest snake.

"Or maybe use my stick, the big, thick one, the new one."

He fell asleep with this last reflection. In front of the house. In the middle of the garden.

Little Jewish World

NOW there was, for instance, this Rivkah Singer. Let's pay a short visit to Rivkah Singer, who is the wife of Mendel Singer and a herring-barrel merchant. It is worth while making her acquaintance, for she is more than her simple name would indicate; besides, she is fated to play a special role in the history of this day.

Like immense tongues the rays of the sun licked the townlet of Strody that morning. One short lick, and life was on the go again.

Rivkah Singer crept out of her bed. Her husband Mendel went on sleeping and snoring, a loud, damp rattling snore. Drunk with sleep, the woman in the thick linen shift gradually rubbed herself into wakefulness. Big white circles ran round her heavy blue underskirt, and on the crumpled neckband of her night jacket there was a border of tiny blue roses worked zig-zag, blue roses.

Blue . . . It's a long time ago, every bit of sixteen years. When she was sewing her trousseau she made a great, beneficent discovery. She discovered, all by herself, for reasons neither of trade nor of anything else, blue, the color blue. Blue, she found out, was always beautiful, on linen, on pots, on crockery. But that's a long time ago, every bit of sixteen years.

Since that day she had become the wife of Mendel Singer, a fine young fellow at the time, not a bad provider; certainly he could have earned enough for himself and a tiny woman like Rivkah if he hadn't, right after the marriage, taken sick; lay there weeks and months with hot forehead, whistling breath, and deep-sunken eyes.

"What a misfortune for poor Rivkah! What's she going to do with a husband sick in the lungs?" asked the world of neighbors, as it always asks in such cases, shaking its head, sympathetic, curious.

"What I'm going to do, good people?" answered Rivkah, astonished. "Why, I'm going to work, plainly and simply. . . . Don't worry, little Mendel, stay in bed, little Mendel, God will help us, my Mendichku. . . ."

God helped. So, later on, did Mechel, the older son. But Mendel remained sick, coughed, spat, was feverish, summer and winter—and Rivkah had no time to be sadly tender and call him her "Mendichku." Where was she to take the time? She wore herself to the bone for the four of them, for she was the mother of two sons. It is no light task to fill four mouths; no wonder, then, that today Rivkah is no longer occupied with the color blue. It almost seems as if she no longer looked at them, either at the color or at the roses she embroidered with her own hands. Ah, how human beings pass away—and not time, which is eternal.

Thus it is with Rivkah, who thinks only of her home, of her three precious ones, and of the fact that what matters is to be well and have enough to eat.

Now she heard the call of the market-place in the village of Strody on the river Stryj, she heard the call of the noodle-board, the herring-barrels, the Jews, the Polish and Ruthenian peasants from the villages.

"Get up, Mechel, quick, get up," she whispered.

Then she loaded her cart.

The wheels creaked and groaned. One wheel, drier than the others, whistled. It whistled with great regularity. Every time it made a half-turn, it let out a shrill note, like a plaint, sometimes like a squeak of mockery.

"Faster!" said Rivkah.

On the cart stood two herring-barrels, and on a small box lay five noodle-boards. The cart swayed, shook, lumbered along the village street. The shaft was as rebellious as a headstrong goat. It threw little Mechel right and left. It whacked him in the sides, that crazy shaft, deliberately, maliciously. Just when he expected it least, he got a hard one. The shaft was in conspiracy with the whistling wheel. Thick as thieves, they were. Every time Mechel got a whack from the shaft, the sly wheel let out a mocking squeak. Rivkah shoved the cart from behind.

"Faster!"

A peasant vehicle rattled past them. Filth flew high against their legs. The thin whip cracked in the air, curses cracked in the air. The market-place was right round the corner. Rivkah shoved harder still with her short arms against the back of the cart. One woman for the whole family.

"Faster!" she said.

"It won't go faster," wailed little Mechel. At that moment he got another whack from the shaft, in the left side. "He-he!" gloated the wheel.

Only five peasant wagons stood in the market-place.

"There isn't a soul here," tittered Mechel, resentfully.

"It's better than coming late," said Rivkah, breathless.

"Maybe we're too early even when we come too late," said Mechel, wanting still to be in the right. This Mechel was about fourteen years old, but of small stature. They're the worst. He

gave the shaft such a kick (at last!) that the barrels, the boards, and the rolling-pins in the box swayed drunkenly, leaned over, seemed ready to fall.

"Mechel!" rose Rivkah's voice, terrified.

Then they unloaded. She, sighing, perspiring, scolding; Mechel, rebellious, wordless, a deep, dark ocean of ill-temper.

"And, besides, I'm still tired," he said suddenly, when everything was standing on the ground.

"May the Evil One come after you, you ungrateful child!" cried Rivkah, and drove him with a rolling-pin from the market-place. With a brand-new rolling-pin!

"Oh!"

The Market-Place

THE pen scratches lightly over the white sheets, on which emerge far-off landscapes, houses, strange people, and strange destinies. . . .

Let's return to Yanek. We left him last night lying asleep in the garden hard by the road. There he belched through the night like a whole herd of full-grown black wild hogs.

This Yanek was a simple man of the woods, like thousands of his kind in the year 1905, with a filthy sheepskin coat and half-high boots, with a face that bristled like a porcupine and a stick which served as a third arm. A huge mountain of flesh not overburdened with brain; for which, be it noted, he was in no wise to blame.

"Ho, ho! A regular Yanek, that's all," opine all non-Yaneks, joyfully.

"Ho, ho! A Ruthenian, that's all," the Poles rejoice.

"Ho, ho! A Pole, that's all," all Ruthenians rejoice.

"In any case, certainly no Jew," says every east-Galician Jew.

On that day the said Yanek had an enterprise before him. He awoke, opened his eyes, sat up, rose to his feet, stood without tottering, stood like a tree.

Then he sat down again, and so sitting looked around, heavy-headed; his trousers were open.

"Where am I?" he brooded darkly.

A long time he brooded and racked his brain. "Shapeless Yanek, unwieldy Yanek, before you stands a house, the sun shines brightly on the whitewashed wall, and you stink of brandy." At last he began to recall.

Behind him, rising boldly from the earth, some twenty sun-flowers lifted high their heads. He stared at them resentfully, in silent mistrust. From above, their giant eyes stared down on the gaping Yanek. They swayed back and forth on their heavy stems, derisive and secretive.

He stank of dunged earth and stale, watery onions. On the grasses and bushes the dew-pearls shone. A powerful odor tickled the hirsute nostrils. Yanek sniffed, growled:

"What's all that stink from, whose business is it to be stinking round here?"

Insulted, irritated, he peered about him. His eyes crept into every corner. "Whose business is it to be stinking round here, ha?"

Behind him rotted a heap of mildewed cucumbers. White maggots curled fatly in the evil-smelling mass.

"Out!" growled Yanek, and with both boots kicked the mass five yards away. "Out!"

Suddenly he was seized with fury. Against Marishka! Against that strumpet, that devil's own whore! Every bit of money she had taken away from him. And for what? For what?

With eyes turned in, eyes glowing white and motionless in deep holes, he yelled in front of the door:

"Open! Open! So I can twist your neck!"

But sly Marishka, cunning Marishka, did not open.

Then Yanek stamped away toward the market-place of Strody.

Someone else was walking toward the market-place, a young man in the blue uniform of a student, with class stripes on his sleeve. The Jews of Strody said:

"Aha! There goes the son of Dr. Nachum Spiegel. He's going to spend his holidays here, it's a pleasant life he has, he studies in Lemberg, his father can afford it. Good day, Herr Student; good day, Mister Student; good day, Mister Student."

When he was describing that market day to me, this "Mister Student" who lives now in Paris, he recalled, in the telling, an amazing wealth of detail. He admitted first that he was not yet a real "student" in those days, he was still in the *Gymnasium* or high school. No matter. For the Jews of Strody, who love to see one of their own mounting the first rungs of the ladder of life, and who are so delighted by the picture that they gladly promote him by a few rungs so that when he falls the fun will be all the greater—for the Jews of Strody he was already "Mister Student." But for the peasants he was a sheeny.

Well, young Spiegel was on holiday and was going to the market-place. What else was there to do in this hole of a place? (He says this contemptuously, but his eyes speak another language. Which one of us does not know that inner split, that homesickness, which all of us feel—and all are ashamed to admit? Ought we to remember with vain longing a land which spat in our faces? . . .) He looked at the market, he looked at the clouds in the sky, at the heaps of straw on the ground. The headcloths of the peasant women flashed red, and under the woolen skirts pattered brown and naked limbs. The women smelt of stables and femininity; their sleeves were rolled up.

Yanek, the raging gamekeeper, burst upon the market-place just when Yossel, the son of Leib Fishman the innkeeper, was standing near Rivkah Singer.

Yanek approached with heavy, threatening steps. He looked dangerous.

Unfortunately it was just at this moment that Róman, the village policeman, left the market-place. It was by accident, really and truly by accident; he did not take himself off because of cowardice. He had a spoiled stomach from eating putrid fish the day before. He ran, this grotesque clothes-horse of a policeman, this skeleton of a Róman, like a hunted criminal. His legs twinkled under his rebellious stomach like two crooked Turkish scimitars, crookeder even. Whoever saw him stood still, to laugh. "A fine policeman!" But he did not hear them. He was in a hurry. In flight he flicked open his belt, furtively undid his suspenders, ran rapidly down to the river bank, behind a bush.

There he squatted and groaned.

Our "Mister Student" saw him flying from the market-place and at once set himself likewise in motion. "Perhaps," thought he, "something has happened, something sensational. Perhaps," said he to himself, "they've found a corpse in the river, maybe two, maybe a pair of lovers who went to their death together. Or," it occurred to him, "perhaps they've found stolen treasure in the bush. Or"—a tittering picture glowed in his youthful brain—"perhaps this old rascal of a Róman has a rendezvous with someone in the bushes by the river. . . ."

But when the "student" saw that the squatting policeman had let his trousers down only to be alone, he turned back. He was a disappointed young man, and he came to the conclusion that life was not at all complicated and wholly devoid of romance.

Meanwhile Yanek, glaring fury, strode through the market-place and sought a pretext for a brawl. "That goddamn woman, that Marishka! Five gulden! All night long in her stinking

garden! That goddamn brandy the Jew gave me! That goddamn sheeny!"

With glazed eyes he stumbled over the straw, growling, cursing; his eyes were bloodshot. "That Marishka! That Jew! Five gulden!"

It was most extraordinary. Though Yanek inquired of nobody after Rivkah Singer (that same Rivkah who, sixteen years before, had discovered the color blue), the two of them came together. He ran toward the woman as if she were the only one in the market-place, as if she alone had barrels for sale, as if they had made an appointment. Yossel Fishman was just saying that his wedding would definitely take place in another three weeks, when Yanek broke in with a howl:

"Give me that barrel! For the count!"

"At your service, Mister," said Rivkah, joyously. "Seven gulden, and that's very cheap. A new barrel, a good one, seven gulden is no money at all for such a big barrel."

Thickset Yanek suddenly had a face like a plank.

"Two gulden!" he snarled and heaved the barrel up on his shoulders.

"Six!" wailed Rivkah. "Five! Five gulden! Not a heller less."

She got a blow in the chest, a blow that flung her to the ground. There she lay, suddenly, flat on her back, among her noodle-boards, motionless, dumb, her eyes wide open with fear. Then all at once she opened her mouth and began to howl, to screech, without pause, without intermission:

"Murder! Thief! Thief! Murd——"

They came running breathless from all sides. The air was filled with voices, many languages, every conceivable pitch. "Where's the murder? Who's a thief? What's the fighting about? Isn't that Yossel, Leib Fishman's son? What's he fighting for? And with a *chlopp*, a *goy!* *Gevalt!* Help! . . ."

"Murder!" screamed Rivkah.

Yossel, lying on the ground, gasped desperately.

"Jew-spawn!" bellowed Yanek, his eyes turned inward. It was a beast that bellowed. He stamped and kicked on all sides with his boots. "Jew-spawn!"

"Police! Police! Where's the policeman?" screamed old Deborah, the half-blind Deborah who dealt in yeast.

With great strides "Mister Student" flew down to the river bank.

Meanwhile two groups had formed, a few peasants on one side, a couple of Jewish butcher boys on the other. "What's happening here, eh?" Biff! A free-for-all is in full swing. And all for the barrel. But a second later there's no more barrel to fight about. Hoops and staves lie on the ground. The staves are shattered, the hoops twisted.

The market-place had become small, there was nothing now but a battlefield. Yanek's eyes rolled like liquid lead. They had good reason now, for Yanek was not a pretty sight. Thick, warm blood ran down from his nose. It ran over his big mustache, which they had half pulled out.

And there stood Rivkah. She no longer called: "Murder!" Sobbing, she stared at the splinters of her barrel. She had managed to rescue the noodle-boards in time.

Yossel had been the first to get up. When the barrel burst into pieces he let go, stood up, dusted himself. His face was very white. "What's the sense of fighting around now? No sense at all. No."

Others were busy with Yanek now. Jews and peasants. It was no longer a question of a herring-barrel, but of a fight that they wanted to settle. That was what they went on fighting for. Nine men rolled around on the market-place of Strody.

At last the policeman arrived. He looked, on the whole, as a

policeman ought to look according to the rules and regulations, except that he had carried something away on the edge of his coat. Getting up, he had not paid enough attention, the interruption had been so sudden.

"The policeman!" jubilated Deborah, regarding his arrival as a personal achievement. Hadn't she called for him, and at the top of her voice?

Uncertainly Róman approached the mass. Skeleton and Turkish scimitars. Yanek was still yelling, still fighting blindly. The other peasants were easier to calm down. The more phlegmatic among the Jews soothed the hot-heads; that already took longer. Excitedly, the crowd cleared a space and awaited anxiously the course of events.

Yossel felt a heaviness as of lead in his temples. A soft weariness stole into his body, he shivered with cold, he was dizzy, there was a flickering before his eyes, as though stars were falling from heaven in broad daylight.

"What is it? Am I sick?" he wondered, reeling.

He went slowly home. They put him to bed.

The Powers That Be

MY grandmother Malka, who loved to give the most palpable expression to her terror, must, during these days, have cried more than once:

"Oh, you fool! You donkey of a son! Tell me! Answer me! How does a Jewish bridegroom come to be fighting around? In three weeks you're going to be married, and here you are doing—what? You piece of nothing, you, you specimen of worthlessness, you—oh!"

And then, with no transition, with a sudden burst of tears:

"My little baby boy, my darling, my all! Where does it hurt you? Say one word to me, only one tiny word. Don't your hear who's speaking to you? Your mama, my little Yossele! Your good, loving mama, Yossele, oh, my Yossele, oh!"

"It's nothing serious," said Dr. Spiegel, reassuringly, that same day. "He'll only be a little lightheaded tonight. But you mustn't be frightened."

For all that Dr. Spiegel went at once to the district captain.

In between, I see the village policeman Róman sitting in the office and composing a protocol of the "disturbance which occurred on . . . at the hour of . . . in . . ." Our Strody Róman was not more addlebrained than the Rómans of other towns or

other countries. He therefore made special mention of the decisive presence of mind of the village constable Róman. It was due to his presence of mind—thus constable Róman reported concerning constable Róman—that the above-mentioned disturbance was not followed by more serious consequences and remained, in fact, nothing more than a disturbance. He took the liberty of adding that the predilection of the peasants who lived near the Russian frontier for pogroms against the Jews was widely known. In big, clumsy letters he put his name at the bottom of the protocol. The letters were thin as skeletons. Some of them were curved like Turkish scimitars.

And shortly thereafter our officious Dr. Spiegel proceeds to the biggest building in Strody. His hands lie on his back, grasping each other as if in confirmation of a vow. The golden pince-nez dances aggressively on the fleshy nose, and the golden chain which he has from his student days in Vienna dangles on his stomach, or rather on the place where a stomach should be and is not. Thus he marches to encounter the district captain: his hat is pushed back till it rests on his neck, the white forehead shines whiter and clearer than the whiteness of the day, the little reddish beard sticks out like a small bunch of carrots above his chin; it sticks out, venomous as a barbed shaft of satire, above the chin, which is in perpetual motion, for the doctor is engaged in serious conversation with himself.

"Something has to be done so that such cases won't happen again," said Dr. Spiegel into the air. He spoke courageously, he spoke to the point and very energetically, as if he had to do with an obstinate patient. "These last few weeks there have been reports of several clashes between Jews and Christians. Some of them more serious than today's. It's high time something was done about it. The powers that be must intervene. . . . It's my duty, specifically, to address the official world. The captain speaks

to me, the 'man of education,' as to an equal, so I can take it on myself to ask for the proper measures. But I don't have any illusions about it, because I know him too well, our captain."

The said district captain was a jovial, smiling aged official whose chin forever dangled over his throat. He was a man on the tip of whose nose Dr. Spiegel could read off the index of his arterio-sclerosis. He looked like the tired official of a firm on the point of bankruptcy. His side-whiskers, the one striking feature in his appearance, were more than irreproachable—they looked exactly as if they had been clipped from one of those pictures of His Majesty, the good old people's Emperor, which had as their object to endear him to the mixture of races that he ruled.

From the description given me by Spiegel junior I judge that the district captain, seeing a Jew enter his office, would usually button up his fine official coat with a decisive gesture, as if he were thereby pulling a door to between himself and the Jew. This time, however, he left the coat open, for though the entering doctor was a Jew, he was, after all, a member of the academic world.

Thus the conference unrolled between the two gentlemen while the subject of it, Yossel Fishman, lay in bed with all the preliminary symptoms of a fever:

"*Servus, servus*, Doctor. What's the news here in Strody?"

"Your servant, Excellency," said the doctor, who was a very modern doctor for Strody, since, as we have already learned from his watch-chain, he had studied in Vienna.

"I've never had to work so hard in my life before," confessed Side-Whiskers, playing absently with three pencils. "It's no joke. I'm about to initiate some vast improvement plans."

Cautious, hesitant, the doctor began: "Excellency, it's becoming a bad business . . ."

Side-Whiskers went on softly, melodiously:

"It's going to be remedied, Doctor, just rely on us, my dear fellow. We've estimated that the water-rats have destroyed one-half of our seed and three-quarters of our fish-spawn. Sad, but true."

"I'm afraid young Fishman will have a permanent mark from this affair," said the doctor. "He's in bed now with brain fever; his eyes will definitely be affected for the rest of his life."

"That's hard lines," sang Side-Whiskers, and went on playing with the pencils. Suddenly he broke out, tearfully:

"His eyes! But what are we of the Government to do about it? What do you expect of us, my dear Doctor? We can't get anywhere by compulsion. I'll give our Róman new instructions: 'From now on, Constable, I want you to be doubly careful on market days.' That's what I'll say to Róman. I'll say it to him today."

"Perhaps there ought to be a public example at last, so that . . ."

"Ha? What's that? What exactly do you expect? What do you think is the extent of our jurisdiction? Our jurisdiction, man! Do you think it's a pleasure to govern and that the matter is as simple as the public likes to imagine it is? Good God! The idea! All for the sake of a—er—an irregularity! Why, Doctor, you astonish me! And really, I always thought you were a man of understanding." Here the captain, deeply chagrined, suddenly came to a pause, hesitated, buttoned his coat resolutely, and continued in a tone of instructive superiority. "We of the Government can't fly off the handle every day. A fine business it would be, wouldn't it, if we took sides with every group. What's more, we're entitled to a bit of tranquillity. Why, only

recently we received instructions from the Very Highest Source to govern mildly, with a gentle hand." And he glanced respectfully at the Imperial portrait on the wall.

Very different, however, was the glance which the doctor bestowed on the captain. "What a zany occupies that chair! And he's not the only one," he thought, shaken.

Parting with his visitor the captain recalled the one concrete function of his office, namely, to maintain harmonious relations with all racial groups, smiled jovially, and asked: "Well, and what do you think of the general situation, Doctor?"

Dr. Spiegel said: "Your servant, Excellency. Your very obedient servant. Greatly honored, Excellency. My humblest thanks, Excellency." For he knew the proprieties.

At the door the old man once more became really friendly. Standing, he once more opened his coat, like a mother about to offer the breast to her child. "True, he's a Jew, this doctor; still, he's a man of education and therefore my equal," he conceded in forgiveness of his own relapse. He spoke confidentially:

"And what did you think of the bridge dedication? Don't you think he made a wonderful address, that councilor from Vienna? Right from the bottom of his heart. 'The Austrian people is proud of its peoples'—that's what he said. A very clear thought, a very penetrating thought, Doctor."

"A brilliant idea," said the other. "The bridge across the Stryj was very badly needed, Excellency."

"He uttered that quite spontaneously," the captain marveled. "Without notes, Doctor, without a manuscript."

"Incredible," agreed the other, and went home. There he sat down at the window and looked out upon this town, with its Poles, Bosnians, Slovaks, Czechs, Ruthenians, Jews, Viennese, Hungarians, Slovenes, Croatians—and could not make up his mind whether he ought to feel ashamed of himself. What had

he really expected of that superannuated and worried district captain?

The son came home, the "Mister Student" who was only a high school pupil, and found his father still sitting undecided in the darkness.

"Well, how was it? What did the captain say?"

Lightly, as if he were following the multicolored flight of a butterfly, the doctor averred:

"From now on Róman will be doubly careful on market days."

At about this very hour the wife of constable Róman probably noticed the filth on the coat-tail of her husband's uniform. She must have given him what for!

"Pfui! Such disgusting carelessness. You're no better'n a three-month baby! My husband, the policeman!"

"What's all the excitement about?" Róman may well have answered. "All over a little ——!"

Here, in this townlet of Strody, lived my father.

Kishinev

MY mother came from a different corner of eastern Europe. Not long after the turn of the century, shortly before the sacred Easter festival, a merchant of Kishinev, which was then a south-Russian city, awoke one night and heard a frightful groaning that proceeded from the maid's room. He sped with big strides up the steep stairway and found the door bolted from the inside. The merchant ran down again, dragged the swearing locksmith out of his warm bed, then thundered at the door of a neighboring doctor, who had also long since retired to bed. Still cursing, the locksmith broke open the weak garret door, but it was too late. The girl lay writhing on the floor. Her lips were contorted with anguish. The weary doctor, who had mounted the steps yawning, snapped into wakefulness at the sight of this body flinging itself about in convulsions of pain. The girl had poisoned herself, he shouted, and had to be taken to the hospital at once.

What followed was the result of a series of circumstances each of which, taken separately, was without significance, but all of which, in their accidental concatenation, were fraught with horrible consequences.

The nearest hospital was Jewish.

The groaning girl was not Jewish.

The merchant for whom she worked was Jewish.

(In the same house there also lived the merchant Abraham Seltzer, together with his wife, his two sons, and his daughter, whose name was Leah.)

In the hospital the maid was given a couple of injections.

In spite of them, she died.

In the city of Kishinev, which counted more than 50,000 Jews among its population of 120,000, there had appeared for many years an anti-Semitic journal, its name *Bessarabetz*. Its publisher, the undersized, baldheaded Pavolaki Krushevan, a skillful agitator, exploited the violent death of the Christian maid in the employ of Jews in order to launch a ferocious campaign against the hated people, against those "bloodsuckers, parasites, ritual murderers."

Cunning as a peasant, this Krushevan issued, on the very day of the death, thousands of special copies of his journal; the headlines screaming across the pages gripped eye and heart as in a vise. Everyone snatched them up: the little bourgeoisie, ever thirsty for sensations; the glowering masses, ever poised to spring; the bored officials, weary of their documents—and above all the sprouting, pimply-faced high school students. In no print, no book, no other newspaper, could the inhabitants of Kishinev find, for the tickling of their nerves, such quantities of rape and other horrors; nowhere else were to be seen female bodies in such a state of nudity, with limbs so disordered, as in the pages of this political, anti-Jewish fighting sheet, *Bessara-betz*.

Fast, horse-drawn carts carried this issue, still damp from the press, across the flat, desolate plains to the ever ill-humored peasants, to whom, in their smoke- and vodka-reeking inns, it

was distributed gratis. Here, where accumulations of Jew-hatred, tended for years, lay heaped up like waiting dynamite, the Easter number of *Bessarabetz* fell like a visible, glowing spark. Not in vain had Krushevan, this man with the jaws of a graminivorous animal longing for the taste of flesh, carried on, year in, year out, relentless war against "the circumcised murderers and beasts." And he carried on this war, the whole city knew, under the benevolent patronage of the official world and the special protection of a high governmental personage in Kishinev who frequently contributed anti-Semitic articles of his own to the pages of *Bessarabetz*. Under the pseudonym of "23."

Here is what the Easter issue put out by the bloodthirsty Krushevan screamed in blazing letters visible from afar:

"Christian girl first violated then poisoned by Jewish blood-suckers."

"Christian girl given ether injections in Jewish hospital."

"Jewish murderers need Christian blood for Easter."

A gigantic crowd assembled at the cemetery for the burial of the unfortunate girl. The Jews alone were missing from among those swarms of battered and malevolent faces, glowering foreheads, and gaping jaws. Helpless, they had barricaded themselves in their wretched houses, piling their wormeaten bedsteads and cupboards, old three-legged or round tables, and whatever other household trash they possessed, against the doors and windows. But it availed them nothing. Stronger even than their panting terror had pictured it, was the directed and bloody torrent of hatred which burst in unrestrained fury on and over them.

Three days the raging, swelling, all-destroying butchery went on, exactly three days and four endless nights. Then all was quiet again. And in the pale light of dawn the victorious peasants

set out again, panting and swaying, on their light country carts. They were contented with their labors. Sated, licking their chops, they petted their horses. They smacked their thick lips and, with wide-open sheepskin coats and heavy pockets, drove back to the scattered villages of the Province of Bessarabia.

Thus the lovely spring began, and the cities, too, were of the opinion that this pogrom would suffice amply for the beginning of the year. It had likewise sufficed for the Jews. There were many of them to be buried.

Leah Seltzer did not remain in this south-Russian town, in which death had gathered in such a rich harvest. What was there to remain for? To visit the dead in the newly opened cemetery and tell them the day's news? To weep over the cold, silent stones? Four of these were needed for the Seltzers alone.

One Meyer Blum, brother-in-law of her murdered father, wrote to her from Lemberg that she might come and live with him and his. Sole survivor of the family, she left Bessarabia. Candles for the annual day of remembrance could be bought in Lemberg too.

Leah did not speak of Kishinev, nor was she ever asked. The Jews of Lemberg are not curious with regard to pogroms. During the first period she would often dream nights of the new cemetery. She saw four long, narrow coffins hovering in the air, and each of the pogrom days was a thick, dark drop of blood falling into the quickly opened graves. When she had this dream she screamed, she trembled and sobbed in her sleep. On such echoing nights all the people in Meyer Blum's house lay awake with eyes staring into the darkness. There are no private pogrom pains. A light weeping broke against the walls. It was horrible. During the day the word Kishinev could not be uttered.

But at last life dealt kindly with the girl Leah and gave her a loving husband.

And she learned to laugh again, to be cheerful again. She learned again to hope for happiness—for him, her husband, and for the two sons she bore him. And for herself, too, last of all, a little happiness for herself. But the great war intervened. It destroyed everything. Her too.

It was on a day in November, a day of no particular importance. The world was wholly unaware of what happened, for the world was occupied with weighty matters of its own.

And Leah was such a tiny little woman.

She collapsed on her bed, a feverish bundle of nerves, flung this way and that by a fate which she had perhaps herself invoked.

At first she thought herself very strong, and therefore she smiled.

Then profound exhaustion came over her, an infinite disheartenment.

A knowledge of her weakness and a terror of it bit deep into her worn face, and the two death hollows became even hollower, those two folds which began at the chin and ran up to the burning eyes, which smiled in despair.

She already knew that her end was approaching.

It was in the war year, 1917.

Her sojourn on this earth had been a brief one.

Her name, at the time of her death, was Leah Fishman.

And I am her son.

The Intermediaries

THE usual course of events is: getting to know each other, falling in love with each other, becoming engaged to each other, marrying each other. But in the case of my parents it began with the marriage. There bride and bridegroom saw each other for the first time.

Had my mother not been the poor niece of a Lemberg ironmonger, and had Aaron Amtmann not been a traveling salesman for the said ironmonger, then my father and mother would never have been brought together. And, come to think of it, had there never been a pogrom in Kishinev, then neither that particular ironmongery business nor its regular traveling representative, Aaron Amtmann, would ever have come to play the role of marriage broker for Yossel Fishman and Leah Seltzer.

The story of Aaron Amtmann is almost a story in itself.

For several years now this big-city commercial man, Aaron Amtmann, had been a regular visitor to Leib Fishman's inn. I remember him very clearly, for he still honored the Fishmans with his visits when I was already at school. Among those bearded small-town Jews he was, to me at least, a portent and world marvel, this clean-shaven man with the sparkling eyes.

The lovely month of May had begun to bloom shyly in that year, 1905, though the topmost twigs of the chestnut trees about

the district captain's building were still stiff with the lingering winter frost.

Aaron Amtmann, the "modern," who shaved his face and wore metropolitan clothes, just like Dr. Nachum Spiegel himself, shivered, even in that month of May, more than nature herself had done several weeks before. Never had he been so dispirited as on that day. He sat with swimming head before his hot, dark brown tea and worried himself green and sick. No, this business trip hadn't paid, it was enough to drive a man out of his senses. But it wasn't his fault, Mr. Blum, it really wasn't, please believe me. I was with him on his rounds among the thick-skulled peasants; I was there when he tried out on them all the tricks of his ingenious profession. Hypnotic as a saint describing the sweet and cloyless joys of "the world beyond the grave," Aaron Amtmann described the virtues of the sharp steel nails, the shining, indestructible wire, and the magnificent, unbreakable shovels that he sold. But the pathos of his magniloquence was poured forth in vain among the farms of his territory, for only six days before David Warnick of Tarnopol—the thief!—had been in these parts and spoiled everything for him.

Now Aaron Amtmann sat, a defeated man, in Leib Fishman's inn, and for bitterness of spirit let his tea grow colder and colder. He stared dolefully at the round slice of lemon floating pallidly on the surface of the forgotten beverage. He felt like a guiltless martyr, and what vexed him most was the thought of the wasted expense money.

You've got to cheer him up, thought old innkeeper Fishman, and launched forthwith on fatherly consolation.

"You won't have much luck with your line this time. After all, how often does a man need a piece of wire or a nail? You'll have to come with something new next time, Mister."

"Something new!" the other burst out. "What do you mean, something new? What, for instance?"

"Perhaps with some pretty girl, some prospective bride," said the old man jestingly, just to offer something positive.

"And have you got a bridegroom for her?" asked the man from Lemberg, furiously.

"Maybe my Yossel, if you have a girl from a good house," grinned Leib Fishman, so as not to spoil the jest, or a good customer.

This entirely unserious conversation brought Leah and Yossel together.

Meyer Blum, merchant of Lemberg, did not fail to observe that the loquacious Amtmann had this time returned empty-handed from Strody. This Aaron Amtmann was among those not uncommon artists of his profession who tell a better story at home than on the road; whose voluminous reports of their unimaginably exhausting activities are often livelier, more successful, and more beguiling than the activities themselves; whose caressing and ingratiating voices have the trick of convincing the taciturn, brooding head of the firm that he is fortunate to have in his employ such a thundering howitzer of a salesman. An industrious, undiscourageable man—in fact, one of the heroes of our century, almost.

"But this frightful century, these ghastly times, this hateful epoch! May the Devil carry them all off! And for my part the sooner the better. Believe me, Mister Blum, a man can't really do more than talk. And that dirty competitor from Tarnopol—I hope he drops dead on the spot. Him too the sooner the better, for my part. Ooff!"

"Nothing doing, eh? No nails and no wire?" mourned the perplexed ironmonger.

Thereupon the unhappy representative uttered three vibrant sighs and said: "No."

Then suddenly he was himself again.

"But all Strody was asking me if I didn't know of a nice girl, a girl of good family. All Strody wants to marry. What do you think of that, Mister Blum!"

"That you're a very poor salesman, that's what I think of it," was the sharp, scolding answer. "Why didn't you think right away of Leah? She's been with us two whole years. It's time, at eighteen."

Three days later Aaron Amtmann sat again in Leib Fishman's inn in the townlet of Strody. In between, a few green buds had poked their heads forth cautiously from the tips of the twigs and peered at the sun like well-bundled babies staring at the swinging lamp. In Amtmann's crafty brain it was now radiant spring weather, and in his breast pocket glowed, in its wrappings of tissue paper, the sad-smiling portrait of Leah Seltzer, who at that moment sat in Lemberg, aware of nothing.

On that day the thoughts of Aaron Amtmann were with neither his wire nor his shovels. He was pursued and possessed by a single idea, behind which beckoned a world of fantasy: the bringing about of a marriage. He had been promised two hundred gulden if he brought it off: a sum which challenged his sense of duty, a sum distinctly worth while. He knew he would make a go of the business. Oh, yes, he knew it already, for today he was every inch the triumphant, irresistible Aaron Amtmann, completely certain of himself. He put his best face on, that smiling, winning countenance of the go-between prepared for every variety of service. Now, as at all other times, the big-city man was armed with a vast supply of ideas and a minimum of principles. These ideas he would fire off at the right moment and

definitely score a bull's eye. In the long years of his activity as traveling salesman he had learned much, among which was that nothing could be more dangerous than principles to the closing of a deal. And does an Aaron Amtmann betake himself to the road in order to sell principles? So there you are! He was what he had always been, Aaron Amtmann, the well-known traveling salesman. Nothing about him was changed—except the trifling matter of the commodity.

And so he launched on his unobjectionable enterprise. Into the willing ear of Leib Fishman he whispered: "Today I come to you in the capacity of marriage broker. I've found something. For your son, Yossel."

"You're here as a *shadchen*?" grunted the quite unastounded Fishman. "And who told you that my Yossel wants to marry?"

Very deliberately Amtmann drew the photograph from his breast pocket, wordlessly, with gestures which commanded silent respect. With exalted countenance he peeled away from the photograph the crumpled tissue paper, as though he were about to expose to the light no picture, but a rosy fruit from the pleasant valleys of Canaan. Outside, the sparrows twittered. A woman's voice pealed across the market-place: "You little snot-nose!" With conceited self-possession, with a confident wink, the salesman placed the sad-smiling Leah Seltzer on the counter. He gave forth a brief whistle, that was one of his silly habits. He could never repress a short whistle when he submitted an ironmongery catalogue to one of his customers—it was a battle-whistle, a sort of whistle of victory. So, to intimidate the enemy and to give ourselves courage at the same time, we storm a fortress with wild shouts of "Hurrah! For Kaiser and Fatherland!" In the crisis of the assault Amtmann did not shout. But he whistled.

"Don't whistle," said Leib with a gesture. Most circumstan-

tially he wiped his greasy hands, wet with the fat of herring-tails and the stickiness of brandy; then he shoved the bent ear-pieces of his spectacles into place and finally picked up the photograph between two fingers.

Standing before him, Amtmann held himself motionless, drew silent breath, tasted to the last delicious drop the climactic moment of his superb profession. With experienced eyes he observed every millimeter of change in the old, wrinkled countenance on the other side of the counter. He did not fail to note that the wrinkles softened, that they derived no unfavorable impression from the intent scrutiny.

When Leib lowered the photograph, the cunning salesman uttered only one word, and that in a light-hearted, gentle tone of voice:

"Well?"

Leib would not respond with so much as a glance. Picture in hand he went out with dignified steps to consult his wife, Malka.

It was in the little room behind the bar that, to the accompaniment of the consumption of cookies and brandy, the second and more important phase of the battle unrolled. Amtmann, still a little uncertain as to the decisive, clinching move, opened by mentioning the size of the dowry. His voice, when he uttered the figure ("What's sure is sure") was not altogether distinct. Leib, full of worldly experience, thought irritably: "The rogue; he's certainly multiplied it by three."

Yossel's mother said, impatiently:

"For us the important thing is the person, Mister."

Thereupon Amtmann told the Kishinev story. When the words "youth," "love," "money," are uttered, everyone reacts with the thought: "What he actually means is this or that . . ." But in those years it was enough for a Jew to hear those three syllables, "Kishinev," and at once there awakened in him the

ancient and immeasurable anguish of his people, all the anguish of two thousand years. Overjoyed, and deeply stirred himself, Amtmann noticed that Yossel's mother had straightway begun to fish out a handkerchief. Naturally he did not let pass the advantage of the favorable moment, but raised the tempting offer and put a fresh intensity into his importunate voice. He spoke with great dignity of the family of the young girl and of Meyer Blum, the universally known and universally respected brother-in-law of the deceased father. "God grant His peace to him and to the other departed ones . . ." He said "departed," not "murdered," but in those days every Jew knew that in Kishinev one did not always die a natural death. She wept quite openly now, Malka, the mother of a Jewish child. Now at last—and with a reluctant gesture, as if he found it infinitely difficult to approach so delicate a subject—at last Aaron Amtmann was prepared to come down to details. Sipping his glass of brandy he finally revealed the young girl's name, and as he reached for the cooky which had not yet been offered him, he began the prelude to the description of her virtues.

As the tonsorial artist, with light and wheedling brush, spreads the soft lather about his customer's chin, and returns ever and again to the caressing gesture, so did Aaron Amtmann spread soft, warm words about his listeners.

He talked himself into a white heat. "I assure you," he exclaimed passionately, "this picture is absolutely the opposite of her. The photograph doesn't show the real Leah at all. It doesn't show her face the way it really is. Not one bit. Her face is as tender as silk, I tell you."

"And her soul?" asked Malka, now again quite matter-of-fact and observant.

Ah, that was the cue he had been waiting for! Enthusiastically, with the delicacy of a connoisseur, he kissed the fingertips of

his right hand. Then suddenly he collapsed into disappointment.

"Her soul!" he asked as in alarm. "Her soul? Take a look at the depth of those eyes! At the snow-white purity of her! At that golden clarity! A hundred souls she has! What do you expect, after all? A photograph of her soul? So far they haven't found a way of photographing souls, and when it comes to the soul of a pearl, a precious stone, like Leah, they'll never find a way of photographing *that!*"

And he rapidly summed up the significance of the hundred souls in four exclamations: "Such a dear, such a charming, such a clever, such a wholesome girl!"

It must be admitted that all thought of the two hundred gulden reward had long since passed from his mind; in all sincerity he was concerned only with bringing about this marriage. He whispered, he boomed, he winked confidentially with eyes and lips and words, as though he were betraying a thousand and one intimacies; he invoked at last in proof of his sincerity the health of his wife and children. Half annoyed, half amused, Leib thought: "But he doesn't swear by his own health, the cautious rascal."

"Really, what's the good of talking about it?" said Amtmann finally, when he was quite exhausted. "One doesn't talk much about such a gem of a girl. One marries her, one is happy, one has little children, the little children grow up and are happy too—what more is there to ask for?"

When he went away, returning to Lemberg, his breast pocket was empty. Powerful, crafty, relentless, his steadfast eyes stared out on the unrolling landscape. And what a dull thing such a landscape is by comparison with such a traveler! What a man he was, this Aaron Amtmann! One word of his, a lifting of the brow, a turn of the hand, and two human destinies were linked together! A new life, a new generation launched! Not only

two hundred gulden earned, but a poor, unfortunate Jewish girl given a life-content, secured in happiness. Well, gentlemen, can anyone among you do the like?

And during that time a dazed and uncertain Yossel held in his hand the picture which was already worn by much fingering. Where was he to have learned how one is supposed to act in such a ticklish situation? Take your oath upon it that this had never happened to him before; there's no call, then, to be amused at him.

His enthusiastic mother convinced him without difficulty. She said, weeping:

"What is there to think about so long? . . ."

She sobbed audibly.

"Well, what is there to cry about now?" growled Leib.

". . . One marries . . ."

Another sob.

"Time enough after the marriage to get to know each other. Don't rack your brain about it before, Yossel."

All settled in his own mind, the father clapped his brooding son on the shoulder.

"It wasn't any different between me and your mother. It was only later that I got to know her, after the wedding. Before or after, walking or running, it's all one. And anyway you never get the hang of their ways."

"She has soul, too," confirmed the mother, happily. Compassionately she recalled: "Kishinev."

"Why did you put the picture down? Look at those deep eyes, Yossel!"

That same evening Leah Seltzer learned that a happy match had been arranged for her.

My little mother. When, in later years, acquaintances spoke of her, they lowered their voices and looked at us orphans with

pitying eyes. A tender, lovely little thing she was, so quiet and so industrious and so clever. But neither before nor after that day were such proclamations of her beauty composed as those authored by Aaron Amtmann. I think she forgave him for having represented her as a soap advertisement. Otherwise the Fishmans would certainly not have heard him to the end.

The Wedding

IT was a beautiful wedding. All the relatives were there from Drohobycz, Kolomea, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Podvoloczyska, Tarnopol, Stryj on the river Stryj (half an hour's distance from Strody), Lemberg, and Sambor. And of course all Strody was invited. They danced a lot and laughed a lot, and best of all was the eating.

They could not look their fill at the mountainous piles of cookies and cakes and slices of bread heavily spread with all manner of delicacies, at the big-bellied beer-barrels, the cooled bottles of wine, and at the generous assortment of brandies. Only the young couple sat in embarrassed silence at the table. They had just got to know each other.

But the guests!

The guests! Their appetites were inexhaustible. They ate continuously and without a let up. They gulped down the edibles like machines. They ground the soft, yielding meats between their firm, yellow teeth. All through the night, into the small hours, they crunched the crisp cookies and chocolates.

With all that, the guests did not forget to talk. And how they talked! So, for instance, half-blind old Deborah (who sold yeast) said softly and furtively to Rivkah Singer (who stood in the market-place with herring-barrels and noodle-boards):

"Now take a look at that bride! I wouldn't say she's ugly—no, not by any means—but pretty?—They could have found the same 'treasure' here at home, the Fishmans. Why did they have to go all the way to Lemberg, of all places, when here, in Strody . . . ? Now my own daughter, for instance . . ."

Others commented, smiling:

"Look at that Yossel there! Sits at the table like a butcher boy, like a block of wood! Scared out of his wits, poor devil! Maybe the *shadchen* did him in the eye, and he's only just coming to and thinking he's got to try and be happy at her side."

The shoemaker, who even on this festive day smelt of undressed leather, was reproachful:

"Shame on you! Even at a wedding you've got to be poking fun at people! When did that become the fashion here in Strody? When did we start making merry at other people's expense? A Jew ought to poke fun at himself." He thought, angered: "You can always expect that sort of joking from outsiders, folk from Stryj on the river Stryj." (The townlets of Strody and Stryj lie thirty minutes apart, dear reader.)

And then the music!

The jolly musicians played the merriest, swingiest waltzes in the world. Joyously they fiddled one tripping polka melody after another. And in the middle turned and twirled the dance-loving youth, while the stiff-limbed old folk sat on long benches round the walls and dreamed along with the rhythm of the music. Tenderly they thought back to their own weddings and, audibly or within themselves, already looked forward to the weddings of their children and their children's children.

And then the food!

"And what do you think of that golden chicken soup? And the liver? And that piece of goose I ate! It was so soft, so good, so tasty! Oh, that Malka's a queen in the kitchen! Such a piece

of stuffed carp is famous in all the towns around Strody. They sing the praises of this woman as far as the Russian border. A stuffed pike of her making is something you never forget. Let's hope, good people, that Yossel's young wife isn't any worse at it. And twenty years from now, at the wedding of the first child of these two young Fishmans, we'll be eating fish again, stuffed carp, and drinking chicken soup with thick yellow drops of chicken fat floating on it. And then we'll think back twenty years, please God, to this day."

Ah, that wonderful day!

"Hey, fiddlers! Let's have a *kosatzky*! For the bride and bridegroom! For the old folk, too, and they aren't so old at that!"

"Come on, Yossel, don't be shy. You're a married man now. Dance with her!"

"What's the matter with you people? Everyone's got a handkerchief for the dance."

"There we go, the circle's ready! There we go, begin the dance! You're in it, too, mother-in-law—right in the middle! Sing, everybody, and clap hands!"

Listen to the sweet rejoicing of the fiddle! Listen to the skeptical grumbling of the bassoon! Oh, but he can't do a thing today, because the fiddle and the flute and the cymbals are mightier than all the skeptics in all the world.

"Spin around, boys and girls, spin around, Leib and Malka!"

"Hi!"

"And you, and you, and this one too! And still one more and that makes four! And you and you and you . . . !"

There were only two people sitting at that wedding who were discontented and ill-humored. One of them we do not know by name, some sort of distant relative from somewhere. He sat there, a bundle of sleepiness, for he was tired; he suffered from

chronic insomnia, poor man. And therefore the decorated room and the dancing people were as wearisome and ill-humored in his eyes as he himself. Every three minutes he grunted: "What a wearisome wedding!" Then he yawned accusingly and aggressively.

But the other of this pair is by no means unknown to us. His name is Aaron Amtmann. He too was dispirited and perhaps with good reason. Right at the very wedding, some two hours before, Meyer Blum had imparted to him a most sobering piece of information.

"From today on you'll have to hand over the territory round Strody to young Fishman," said the ironmonger, stammering helplessly. "It's too bad. This territory, my dear Amtmann, happens to be part of the dowry."

"Hoihi!" sang the fiddle, joyously.

"I see nothing to be joyous about," grumbled the bassoon.

Thereupon Amtmann sat down in an empty corner like a defeated generalissimo. Mournfully he thrust the trembling fingers of his right hand between the black ebony buttons of his particolored vest, and let his head, his heavy head, sink upon his raging bosom.

"I see nothing to be joyous about," grumbled the bassoon, darkly.

"That's what you get for doing people a kindness," ground Amtmann between his false teeth.

"Exactly," grunted the bassoon.

"This wedding isn't a good stroke of business for me," the salesman of Lemberg summed up. "No, it isn't. I could kick myself. What possessed me to commit that folly? I should never have brought Leah and young Fishman together. What's the good of two hundred gulden? I'm losing ten times that amount."

And he boils. He seethes. He protests, softly, softly.

"Robbery, that's what it is, making a wedding at my expense, a wedding for strangers, and I have to pay for it; it's enough to make you burst."

But he didn't burst, because the bassoon, the grumbling bear, went on grumbling:

"Come, Aaron, don't eat yourself. You suffer, and nobody else."

Yes, it was a wonderful day!

"She really has soul and beauty, that bride," said mother Malka, radiant with content.

"Yes-yes-yes, ye-e-esss!" the fiddle confirmed, in a merry ripple of melody.

"Look how Yossel's eyes are fastened on her," was the touched observation of the ironmonger Meyer Blum.

Sourish-sweet the half-blind Deborah reported: "She's blinking and winking secretly at that shy man of hers."

"Will you look at those tender, loving glances of his!" lisped the sensitive-souled butcher Sender.

"First time I ever saw a look like that in his eyes . . ." yawned the weary distant relative.

"What's so out of the way in those glances?" asked Aaron Amtmann, raging, but anxious to let no one see that he was raging.

"Well!" explained "Mister Student," magniloquently. "They are what you might call truly predatory glances."

A sweet little cousin from Sambor asked shyly: "How can you tell that, cousin?"

"How? Can't you see? Isn't there something yearning, self-forgetful, sensual, in his looks?" confided "Mister Student" dramatically, his imagination on fire.

"Hoo-hoo!" tootled the impudent flute.

Rivkah Singer made a discovery: "Why, he's a man, your son!"

"Who's a man?" her fourteen-year-old son Mechel wanted to know.

"His eyes! They just can't have enough of her!" said old Leib, chewing, and shoved the sixth piece of stuffed carp into his mouth.

"How happy my little boy is!" beamed Malka, touched.

"He's as stuck on her as a nail in a wall," the ironmonger explained in the language of the trade.

"Just the way it ought to be!" twinkled all eyes.

And then, at the close, there was one more *kosatzky!*

The musicians, streaming sweat, were already standing in their rolled-up shirtsleeves on long planks laid across the tops of empty beer-barrels.

What a jubilation gurgled from the delirious fiddle! How the flute capered and the cymbals tinkled. And the bassoon, the stumpy skeptic, grumbled slyly: "It's no good, flute, it's no good, fiddle and cymbals, you'll never catch up with that stupid young couple!"

And Yossel made such gawky dance-steps, for he was no dancer.

"Let's hope he'll at least make a good husband, that young man," was the anxious prayer of a visitor from Stryj.

"No woman with steps like that, such hopping and shuffling, can be happy," remarked the still unmarried daughter of the half-blind Deborah, with conviction.

"Pfui!" exclaimed the shoemaker contemptuously, and downed another brandy.

Leah's arm lay bent back, one hand supported her head with the heavy knots of dark hair. Yossel twirled and tripped in circles about her with unskillful and yet rhythmic steps. Leib

and Malka, the two young old folks, danced the same dance in the same circle. Something in old Leib bubbled up, a fountain of gaiety, so that his steps became springier and springier, till they suggested the leaping of a mountain goat. It may have been the red paprika, or else the black pepper in the hot fish-sauce. It may have been the brandy, the wine, or the beer. But it may also have been nothing more than sheer joy.

"He's a regular youngster, that old Leib," observed those people who, as we know, always have something to say.

The guests were still merry, but already tired. Still they clapped their hands industriously.

Then came the cold glimmering of dawn. Two roosters crowed shrilly, and somewhere in the townlet of Strody a dog bayed.

Now the wedding was over.

Now the marriage could begin.

When Leah, awakened by bright sunlight, opened her frightened eyes, she found herself lying in the arms of the lightly snoring Yossel. She did not move, lest she awaken him too; she only lifted slightly her face, into which the blood had rushed, and looked sideways into his.

It was the first time she could observe her husband undisturbed, for until the wedding they had never seen each other, while at the wedding itself, a few hours before, they had been surrounded by the guests, who had never wanted to get out of the way. Now there was no one to interfere.

So this was he, her husband, her Yossel, who, with his glasses off, as she could now see, really did not look a day more than his twenty-one years. As he did not move, she took heart and looked at him more closely. Eagerly she tried to imagine what he would look like without a beard, and at the same time she

felt that though she had begun by staring at him as if he were a stranger, yet the face, the longer she looked at it, gradually lost its strangeness.

But when he started suddenly and with eyes still half closed took her in his arms again, caressed her hair, kissed her, she was again overcome by a longing to weep, she felt lost and weak, and the tears streamed unrestrained from her eyes.

Love Begins

YOSSEL FISHMAN now shared his room with a girl on whom, until the day before, he had never set eyes. Somewhat tired, somewhat astonished, he lay near her and considered the matter in its entirety. He said to himself, still abashed, that now the real thing was beginning, the business of "living with a wife," and he felt none too good about it.

Leah, too, was haunted by the same worries. A storm of sensibilities hitherto unknown to her awakened within her, bringing with it a state of spirit utterly new in her experience, so that thoughts occurred to her of which she was ashamed, because they confused her. A longing seized her, it fluttered like a bird in her heart, in her brain, in all her limbs, and gave her no rest. It was the longing to love and be loved.

As she dressed in front of him (she was terribly ashamed), she asked herself helplessly if one had to get used to love slowly, as to some unfamiliar food. But at once she rejected this idea, which had seemed so reasonable only a moment ago, and said to herself anxiously: "Perhaps love comes right away or not at all."

While following him down the steps she trembled. "Perhaps one can learn everything, except love."

As she helped his mother to set the table it seemed to her that

just a moment before the thought had occurred: "Perhaps I love him already."

But then, in utter discouragement, she asked herself whether that which she had just felt, for the first time in her life, was "real love, true love."

When Leah sat next to Yossel (their faces were flaming) and saw those embarrassed, evasive glances, that helpless, guilty boyish face, which contrasted so frankly with the sparse beard, she felt that already she was really fond of him. And she felt him growing closer to her as she became aware that he was haunted by the same "worries."

Malka, chattering eagerly, kept urging them on: "Eat, children, there's so much left over from yesterday."

"Why aren't you eating?" asked Leib, reproachfully, and helped himself from every plate. "Nothing but the finest delicacies, and you sit there and let me do all the work of eating it all by myself."

Yossel and Leah set to awkwardly. Yossel was thinking of the words with which they had been wedded: "It is written in the Holy Book that man and wife must become wholly one and must never, not even for a second, think only of themselves, or else the marriage is straightway destroyed. . . ." Leah was thinking of a great many things, she would have liked to ask this and that; she answered all questions respectfully, but as yet asked none.

Malka tried to propose something. "Afterwards you can go upstairs once more, you must both be tired, you can lie down again."

"No, no . . . I don't want . . ." said Leah, frightened. When she saw the astonished glances that Malka and Leib turned upon her, she stammered: "I'd like . . . to take a look at the house. . . ."

"Tell her you'll show it to her," Malka exhorted her embarrassed son. "Our house is the biggest in Strody."

"The other houses here have only one upstairs story, or none at all," Leib enlightened his daughter-in-law.

"Our house has a garret," explained Malka, proudly.

"And how about the balcony?" asked Leib, rebukingly. "Why do you have to leave out the balcony?"

"The only balcony in the whole district," Yossel threw in quickly, happy to have found something to say—at last.

"Don't forget to show your wife how to open the yard door," his mother reminded him.

And, since Yossel seemed to be looking too long for words, "It's quite simple," Leib elucidated this important problem which posed itself to the newly married couple on their first wedded day in Strody. "You've only to press it rather hard from right to left, otherwise you think it's locked."

"But it isn't," said Yossel. "It's always . . . open."

"Why do you talk so little, children?" asked Malka, smiling.

"And what's more, why aren't you eating anything, children? Nothing but the finest delicacies, and you leave it all to me to handle by myself," said Leib, sternly, and with a reproachful snort dug his son in the ribs.

That self-same day Leah became acquainted with "all Strody and the river Stryj." Late in the afternoon the young husband led her down to the river where, a couple of years later, I, her child, romped about.

"That's the Stryj," he said, and imparted to the brief declaration a comically significant tone which often made my mother laugh—only after a couple of years, though—whenever she thought back to the first day they had spent together. "That's

the Stryj," is what he said, and for the rest he let nature speak. The water flowed lazily along the curve of the bank, and in the sedge the wild fowl gabbled. Children dived naked into the unappetizing pools and when they came up again their shoulders swam like fragments of tender innocence on the dismal levels of the river. They splashed each other noisily, threw flat white pebbles at the dragonflies sailing green and blue through the air, and with willow switches chased the loudly protesting frogs onto the dry land.

Leah became aware that it would have made her happy to take Yossel's arm, but she did not dare. It would have made her happy to kiss him in front of all these romping children, but that was even more impossible. Secretly she imagined what he would really say if, in spite of it all, she were suddenly to do it. And then at last Yossel found his tongue again. He spoke of "dangerous river currents," of "floods," of the "power of the Stryj," of "the falls"; but what she would much have preferred to know was if he was capable of losing his temper, of hitting a woman, or of abandoning her in a fit of rage if he did not like her any more. Abandon? . . . Terror shook her to the inmost heart when she realized what abominable imaginings she could slip into on these first hours of her marriage. Instantly she resolved to do everything possible to keep him at her side.

In the night that followed, the old Fishmans cannot have done much sleeping. Greatly worried, old Leib shuffled over to Malka's bed, and said unhappily that he did not like that oppressed look on Yossel's face. "Did you notice how helpless he was?"

"You didn't look one bit cleverer yourself twenty-two years ago," Malka reassured him and rolled over, turning her face to the wall and her broad back on the disconcerted Leib, a gentle intimation that his disappearance was in order.

Whereupon the old man shuffled away. His bed stood opposite hers.

Slowly, like the pendulum of a clock, passed the first days and weeks of the marriage of the young Fishmans. Peacefully the hours swung right and left. Only the rain introduced from time to time a monotonous variant, for then Yossel and Leah sat at the window and watched the heavy drops. Someone, soaked to the skin, ran down the sopping street; then Yossel would mention the name of the man who happened to be hopping past, and would impart to Leah the number of his children, likewise the exact total of his income, the degree of his piety, and whatever else one had to know about another Jew of Strody. The trees dripped, as though nature were filtering a refreshing drink through to these conversations.

During those days one fear dominated Yossel's thoughts: that Leah might be thinking too much of Kishinev and her dead family. At that, he knew of course that she could never wholly forget those bloody Easter days. When she sat by him quietly meditative he was tormented by the thought that against the memory of her childhood in Kishinev she could break like some delicate piece of glass, and this fear caused him unspeakable pain.

Yossel guessed right. Leah herself surely feared these pictures of the past more than he. "One mustn't always be mourning," she reproached herself. (I, her son, rehearsed the same Jewish soliloquies in later years.) "One is only human, after all, one wants to know, at long last, what the taste of happiness is." In several letters that she wrote to Lemberg shortly after her marriage she confessed to this inward struggle.

Once every week, on the Sabbath afternoon, Malka read forth to herself and Leah from the thick, yellowing volumes of the

immemorial history of the Jews, who long ago lived and fought in the Holy Land. On the very first Sabbath after I was born, I was already in on these readings, or "learnings," as they called them, when they read forth the Hebrew texts and translated them into Yiddish. We wandered side by side with young, spring-footed Absalom through the broad and blossoming valleys, the rich, heavy-hanging vineyards of Canaan. We stood with good, clever Ruth in the glowing field, amid burnishing sunlight and yellow sheaves, and helped the men of Judea at their labor. . . . Life in Strody was poor and pent, it knew nothing of friendly hills, of peaceful valleys, of sunny fields belonging to Jews—Jews, whom it was the custom to ask, with a cunning, malevolent grin: "Hey, sheeny, haven't you croaked yet?" But no one could prevent us from taking our joy in the glories of that far-off land that wise King Solomon ruled of old.

Not least among the things through which Leah took deeper and deeper root in the house of the Fishmans were these Sabbath afternoons.

The life of her husband unrolled before her eyes—the life of a simple, pious Jew of eastern Europe. She saw him, during the day, stand up for the prescribed prayers. When he was a little boy of six he had had to read them from the book, but now it was long since he had begun to say them by heart. In the early morning, in the gray of the twilight, he rose and prayed to God that He might be gracious to him this day, too, and protect him and his wife and all the house. In the afternoon, as the day was drawing to its close, he repeated the supplication. And with the coming of evening, when darkness gathered about Strody, he prayed for the next day. Before he entered a house, another's or his own, he uttered the prescribed benediction for the house and its inmates. Before every meal he washed his hands and thanked God that there was cleansing, refreshing water and

strengthening nourishment for the Fishmans. Whenever he cut a slice of bread he gave thanks to God that He had extended His protection to the sensitive fruit of the fields and had blessed the heavy labors of the peasants. And when the meal was over he gave praise to God's creation, "for nothing under heaven and on the earth is as perfect as Thy creation, O Eternal, my God . . ."

And on Friday evenings, when the young stars hung over Strody, and in all Jewish homes candles burned in silver candlesticks which shone like mirrors with much polishing—then the Sabbath, the most glorious of days, was a guest in the house of the Fishmans. Then the young wife Leah listened to the ancient, long-drawn melody of the benediction over the "red wine from the vine-clad slopes of the Jordan," and she drank from the same beaker as her husband.

The marriage of my parents, which Aaron Amtmann arranged, was a happy one from the beginning. For they were young, and they loved each other with as deep an inward love as two beautiful royal children whom reasons of state had brought together and the reports of whose happiness, side by side with their pictures, fill all the newspapers of the world. In that tiny, unknown Galician townlet of Strody, Leah and Yossel loved each other the way young people love each other everywhere: with tender embraces, with foolish billing and cooing, with the great longing to become "one" which fills all healthy beings.

A night-moth fluttered amazed about the lamp and the bed covered with white quilts. But as it was dark, nothing could be seen; only the voices could be heard.

"You're so good to me . . ."

"Your mouth . . . it's like raisins . . ."

"You're so good to me . . ."

"Your eyes . . . like two stars . . ."

"I love you so . . . Yossel . . ."

"Do you know how your lips taste . . . Leah . . . ?"

"No . . ."

"Like honeycakes . . . Only a lot nicer . . ."

"I love you so . . ."

"Your teeth . . ."

"You . . ."

"Leah . . ."

"You . . . you . . . you . . ."

She was so obedient and helpless. She lay there arched backward. She did not thrust him from her. He was the only one she had in the world. She loved him greatly, she wanted a child by him.

And the walls, the whitewashed walls, stank, for it was high summer, and they would not begin to crack and blister until the fall.

Leah threw an arm about his neck and snuggled more firmly to him.

The room was beginning to emerge dimly in the morning twilight when they fell asleep, simultaneously.

In the Sweat of Thy Brow

BUT man does not live by love alone. And when spring returned, and with it the time when the peasant was accustomed to buy his nails and his wire, Yossel had to go forth to encounter life and its hostilities.

He got himself a lean horse and a rattletrap of a cart; he loaded on his goods and he set out for the country, out into the mysterious spaces, to the peasants.

Life is the same manure-heap everywhere. Yossel was burdened with weaknesses, sensitivities, and resentments like every other man. He surely lived, like every one of us, in a web, spun by others, of misunderstandings, errors, and illusions. And though there were many who knew his heavy-spirited seriousness and who called him a "peculiar sort of man," he was in reality no more "peculiar" than you or I. He was an extremely simple person, this young Fishman.

But let us go back to the townlet of Strody in the spring of 1906. Yossel had long had his opinion of the peasants, before he spoke with them, and he knew, too, that the peasants had their opinion of him before they even set eyes on him.

"Hi!" shouted Yossel, and the bony nag bestirred itself, it shook the big harness bells, and the dried-up wooden wheels

sprang with every conceivable kind of noise over the stones.

"What's the best way of getting to do business with the peasants?" Yossel considered on his jolting seat. "It's very hard to approach them. As soon as they see a Jew they become suspicious. All day long they work with grasses and stones, with earth and wood, and then some Jew comes along and frightens them with his cleverness."

Yossel whistled into the air and at his side the telegraph wires sang sentimentally like the strings of a harp.

"The Jews of Strody are too clever for the peasants who live hereabouts," Yossel brooded. "The contrast is too violent, that's why we can't get along with each other."

Stones sprang up in the whirl of dust raised by the cart-wheels. Yossel was thinking: "You've got to be lucky to be lucky with a peasant; that means you've got to be lucky twice over." He likewise made the observation: "The peasants don't understand us, probably because our thoughts are too complicated."

The roads lay before him empty and parched. A flock of ravens rose from a field, leaving far below them the stinking carcass of a hare. Yossel pursued the same bitter analytic strain:

"Business with the peasants isn't a simple matter. Who knows how to deal with them? One minute they're singing, the next minute they're drinking themselves into a stupor. When Eastertime comes round they become wild as beasts and howl: 'Kill the Jews!' What can you do about it? Who knows what lies their popes hand out to them about us in the church? You can tell these peasants anything. . . ."

Yossel fingered his beard and while he whistled tried to think up a way of dealing with the peasants.

"You've got to come to them after a meal. The fuller the stomach the milder the thoughts. A stomach is a stomach, there's no difference that way between a peasant and a Jew. Fortu-

nately there's no pope in the stomach. When you've eaten something, everything looks a bit softer than before. Never have anything to do with hungry peasants."

Driving thus through the region, sniffing at the heavy, windy countryside of the peasants, at the dark woods, the fat furrows, the far-off heavens, Yossel, of the townlet of Strody, often thought of Yanek the gamekeeper, with whom he had once had a fight. As a memento of that fight Yossel wore a pince-nez for the rest of his life. "All peasants are like that Yanek. What a life! I'll sell it to you for two groschen!"

From far off dogs greeted him, roosters set up an angry crowing, and the first houses seemed to be shrinking timidly back from contact with Yossel Fishman, the Jew. In the morning air there was a mingling of the smells of horse-sweat and the dung-heaps in the neglected peasant yards, swelling into one mighty stink.

Yossel went straight into the first house. The peasant, a Pole, sat there massively, his body bursting with rude health, and scarcely glanced up. Yossel, half his size, saw it all quite clearly, but he did not want to see it, he did not dare to see it, for a man must fight if he wants to live.

"Good morning, Mister Peasant," he said. "Have you eaten well today? How is it with you? With your children? With your good wife? With your grandchildren? How are your cattle? How's the crop—this year's crop? How was last year's? And the year before? . . ."

Yossel spoke Polish and the peasant remained silent. (Watch it, Yossel! You never know! A peasant is a peasant!)

"Mister Peasant," Yossel began again. "Last year a story was going the rounds in Vienna . . ."

"Jew," growled the Polish peasant, oozing hatred, "I don't want to know anything about Vienna. About Vienna or about

Austria." Not an eyelash flickered as he said this. It sounded as though he were singing threateningly the song of Poland—"Poland is not yet lost."

"Mister Peasant," Yossel began all over again, because you mustn't let go, "you're right. I'll tell you a story that comes from Warsaw." And he told, perhaps a little too shrilly, a story current in Strody, about a clever Polish peasant, a patriot for all I know, who was being overtaxed by the Russians.

"What do you think of that! They overtaxed him! As if things weren't bad enough already, so that we hardly know how . . ."

"H-m!" grunted the peasant.

"In any case, he banged his fist down on the table in front of those gentlemen! And what do you think? He got what he wanted."

"And where do you Jews know such stories from?" grunted the peasant, coldly. "How is it you know everything so exactly, ha?" Angry, dull, the whites of his eyes swelled up. Thickly, churlishly, he spat out: "Filthy Jewish black magic!"

The thought shot like lightning through Yossel: "So I'm a black magician too now, very well then . . ." and he added the hasty assurance: "I got it from a brother of that very peasant who banged his fist on the table."

"Tell that to your Jewish Devil," snarled the peasant, crimson with hatred.

"It's hard, but you mustn't give up," reflected Yossel. "And what can you do? If you don't tell any stories, out you go through the door. And if you tell stories you've heard from someone else, it's just as bad."

Yossel tried to penetrate to what the peasant was thinking of. Take it from me, you've got to sweat for it if you want to do business with such people.

He began all over again, with another story. If you can't create

the right mood you can't do any business, if you don't tell stories you can't create the right mood, that's how it goes, an everlasting treadmill.

"Mister Peasant," he said, "Mister Peasant . . ." He threw out one merry phrase after another, like bait. And all the time his eyes were fixed on the back of the neck of the peasant squatting there, and, speaking of a thousand and one other things, he kept asking himself:

"What's going through his mind about me?"

("This goddamn Jew, this cut-throat, this traitor, this blood-sucker," he's probably cursing me inwardly. If he didn't happen to be sober he'd throw those words in my face, kick me out of the house, and set his dogs on me. And if there wasn't an Imperial Austrian law against it, he'd beat me up without mercy. Then other peasants would come running, with scythes and threshing-flails, so that he shouldn't overexert himself with this Jewish rogue—which means me, Yossel. But he's probably saying to himself, between his teeth: "It's too bad they have courts, and it's too bad there's a big high gallows in one of those courts, in Lemberg. When you drive your cart by the wall of the dark building in Lemberg you can see that strong, bare arm sticking out, as you sit on your driver's seat, goddamn it!" He'd be cursing and spitting: "There's more than one man who's had to dangle from that gallows, but it's never been a Jew . . . ! And why has it never been a Jew, eh? Those Jews have their stinking fingers in every pie. They're thick as thieves with the hangman, they stand him drinks and give him their poisonous food to eat. And as for the higher-ups in the Government, they've long been thick as thieves with them too! And where do our taxes finish up, if not in their greasy gaberdine pockets! Stinking Jew-mob! Beat it! Get out of my yard . . . !")

"Mister Peasant," said Yossel finally, smiling, and he wiped

the sweat from his forehead, "that's the funny story of fat Marishka . . ." Poor Yossel had grown hot.

The peasant looked at him, cold, mistrustful, glowering; between the two lay a wilderness of dangerous thoughts. In spite of which he gave Yossel an order for wire, for spades, because he needed these things. He ground his teeth as he did it, but where else was he to buy these goods? Matters hadn't advanced so far yet. There had, indeed, been a lot of vague talk about a "peasants' co-operative," but as long as this "co-operative" wasn't there, they couldn't kick the Jew out. And, most important of all, who would extend credit for a year, and even longer, if not the Jew?

"Hi!" shouted Yossel, and the cart rolled on. Toward another village. And Yossel was thinking:

"Only our kind could put up with that sort of life; and go on living, and selling, and doing business just the same. Oh!" The whip whistled angrily through the air, fingernails dug into the palm of the hand.

"Take it easy, Yossel, swallow the mockery and the insults. Swallow them down, Yossel. A Jew must give ground, must always be the cleverer one. There are very few Jews in the world, but there is no end of such peasants. Swallow your rage, Yossel. . . .

"Hi!"

A Parasite

ONLY one who has never had to earn his daily bread as a Jew in Galicia, in the period before the war, would think of measuring Yossel's business methods (I shall have more to say about them in the sequel) by the standards of the west. In any case I regard Yossel Fishman, of Strody, as a man of honor. More than that: I regard him as a hero.

The path of his life was so thorny, his struggle for a livelihood was so desperately courageous, that he was as justly entitled to medals and a monument as many a great field-marshal. For, in the first place, he fought all his battles himself. When he set out to do battle for his little bit of life, it was his own neck he risked, and not someone else's. And here is what touches me to special admiration for him: that heart of his, always brimming with unshed tears, never stopped loving.

But it would be ridiculous, and a distortion of the truth, if one were to conclude from the foregoing that the Galician Jewish world knew nothing but "heroes." I did, indeed, get to know many Galician Jews who were very much like him, but there were others, around whom (as around many non-Jews) I would make a circle, as if they were disease-carriers.

Two letters that I dug up contain an extremely amusing pic-

ture of Strody life in the days before I had appeared in the world and when travels and visitors were not the taken-for-granted things that they are today. These letters have to do with an unusual sort of fellow who came to the Fishmans, according to his own account, all the way from Tarnov—and at that time the Tarnov-Strody journey was something to be compared with a New York-Moscow flight in the present year of grace. I tell this story not only for the easily understood reason that I like it (for it shows the Fishmans, and above all the young wife, in a delicate position), but also because I want to offer Messrs. the anti-Semites the pleasure of meeting one of *their* Galician Jews. Give every man his due.

And so on a midsummer day there came this visitor from Tarnov, a young man who entered the inn as a guest, ordered drinks and a meal, emptied glasses and plates alike, and, when it came to the question of payment, put on an extremely astounded look. "What do you mean, pay?" he asked, aggrieved. Why, he was a relative, yes, a relative of the Fishmans; he said this with unchallengeable firmness, and since when was it a custom for ~~relatives~~ coming from far away (Tarnov, no less!) to be presented with a bill? Yes, Mister Fishman, a relative! His aunt and Malka's aunt had been, as it were . . . well, not the aunts, when you came down to it, but the husbands of the aunts. You couldn't say exactly, after all these years, exactly what these uncles and aunts had been, but that some sort of connection existed had been established beyond all shadow of doubt.

Until that day the Fishmans had not even suspected the existence of this young man: not until he marched into the house, ordered himself a sumptuous meal with tea and brandies, waved aside the question of payment, then laughingly shook hands with everyone and said, with disarming friendliness:

"Good day and peace be with you, your house is my house, I

like you lots, you Strody Fishmans, and I'll be glad to spend a day with you!"

What a thoroughly detestable creature! Have you ever heard the like of it? Nobody knows him, nobody wants to know him, nobody's interested in him—and what do you think he does? He just goes and invites himself. "Your house is my house!" As we shall see in a minute or two, the house wasn't the only thing he liked about the Fishmans.

Three days passed, then eight. "One of these modern fellows," growled old Leib.

The "beloved guest" stayed a whole fortnight. He had powerful, incredibly big hands which reached out in every direction and laid hold on things firmly, regular robber hands. Whenever he began to talk the Fishmans grew dumb and stared in astonishment at those long, pointed fingers which, with magnificent gestures of finality, disposed of every sentence as it emerged, choking it to death or running it through the heart, according to need.

"A juggler," thought Leib, angrily, and asked spitefully: "You like Strody a lot, don't you, young man?"

"First rate." The guest beamed in his youthful strength, and stayed another week—making it the third.

"That's how young kings must surely have smiled," Leah may have thought, unknown to herself, in a secret corner of her heart, and acted as if she had not noticed that the visitor from Tarnov was making eyes at her.

But Yossel was not in the mood to ignore things out of delicacy of feeling, and so it happened that on a Friday evening, as they all sat at table, he intercepted one of those glances, just when they were all busy with the soup. He was genuinely enraged, and he addressed himself to the pompous, self-satisfied,

self-invited charlatan in a voice very definitely audible to everyone in the room:

"Stop that!"

The young husband made no little rumpus about the business.

"If that sort of thing is the fashion in Tarnov," he shouted, "you can go right back to Tarnov! Here in Strody, thank God . . ."

"Is it forbidden even to look at her?" asked the fellow, caught red-handed, and putting on an exaggerated innocence and dignity.

"It's no one's business to look at her! Especially a person like . . ."

"What's all the shouting about? Let's have some quiet, children," Malka said, soothingly.

"On the Sabbath, of all days!" protested Leib. "If it weren't the Sabbath I'd take this Tarnov thief, this hoodlum, this disgrace to the Jewish people, by the scruff of the neck and pitch him into the street!"

"The Sabbath!" shouted Yossel, more and more excited. "It's quite permissible to thrash such people even on the Sabbath!"

The terrified Leah stroked his arm imploringly, stroked him soothingly back into his chair, stroked him into calmness. She already knew her Yossel well; he's not only sentimental; he's a regular man too, that husband of hers. . . .

To punish the guest from Tarnov she did not turn her eyes once in his direction. The evening was spoiled, everything tasted like burned meat. Had she as a matter of fact ever turned her eyes in his direction, this "Good-day-and-peace-be-with-you"? Certainly not! The things a complete stranger can think up out of his imagination!

When the first stars announced the close of the Sabbath the

complete stranger left Strody. He sneaked out of the Fishman house like an untouchable, like a leper. No one wanted to shake that eager, powerful hand of his. He was done for in this house. For good.

There Strody and the Fishmans were, and they breathed freely again. But there, likewise, was a by no means simple question: had Leah, the young wife, drifted a little in her thoughts from Yossel? What do we human beings know about ourselves? We know, perhaps, that into the life of every woman there comes, once at least, a "relative" from Tarnov.

Yossel Battles

IN the fall Yossel once more visited the villages about Strody. He traveled with his little cart from farmyard to farmyard, drove forth daily, with the exception of the Sabbath, along the country roads. Near him on the cart lay a big, knotted stick, and it lay there, alas, not for merely ornamental purposes.

Thus he made his rounds. . . .

Soon the land would be nothing but a single doleful plain of snow. Ravens would flutter above the white fields and croak on the heavy-laden straw roofs of the half-covered, lonely peasant huts. In this land of mysteries, of tensions, of religion and superstition, the dreary winter came with complete suddenness. It was rumored, too, that this year the winter would be unusually harsh and severe.

However, it was not here yet. As yet the sun still flooded sky and earth quite warmly, it poured its rays down on Yossel, who sat high up on his driver's seat and juggled about with his intelligence.

Yossel's intelligence was his instinct and when it deserted him he felt how poor and powerless a human being can become in certain moments. He presented the slightly dreamy picture of a man of not particularly imposing stature who always did his

best to be industrious and who made the distinct impression that if he once began something he would see it through to the end. Once his instinct had said: "Yes!" nothing could shake the tenacity of his intelligence. Like many men who have passed their childhood tied to the apron strings of a very energetic mother, he was always somewhat embarrassed, even helpless, and this impression was now considerably strengthened by his thick glasses. In the way of love he was, if I may trust my knowledge of human beings, dependent and grateful, an irreproachable husband aggressively shy. Here he was on his own territory, his own master; he was himself throughout. But how was it with regard to the professional aspect of his character?

I know well enough that in his business life he was forced into a fawning attitude, into a wordy, sometimes a boundless servility. But it would be quite false to regard as a contributory factor his frequently ridiculous touch of melancholy; the explanation lay in his peasant customers, who gave brutal and dangerous expression to their vicious and passionate hatred of the Jew. But these "professional traits of character" came into play only in the difficult struggle for existence, when he was selling nails, wire, and spades. Like many another Yossel he knew how to create a painfully clear division between the two halves of his character. How he brought this about belongs to the wonders of the human soul. The one certain thing was that he would rather bamboozle the peasants than himself and the Fishman family. I know that the hard life of eastern Europe sometimes forced these Fishmans into ways that were not particularly clean: that they were frequently faced with one of two alternatives—to swindle or to perish of hunger; that for decades these Jews were divided off from the other peoples, jammed into a few alleys with no other aperture to freedom than that through which their dead were carried to their eternal rest; that the

streets in which for centuries they passed their miserable lives, strangers, hunted from place to place, were terrifyingly narrow—tightropes one might call them, and he who did not wish to fall off into the abyss had to learn to behave like a tightrope dancer.

And so it was that Yossel Fishman, too, walked about the farmyard of a peasant as if he were balancing himself on a tightrope. Most of the time it was a repulsive sight, often it was ridiculous and at times even unnatural. Not every tightrope dancer is a born actor-acrobat, skilled in concealing from the spectators the sour sweat of his agony. And yet others than born actor-acrobats have the impulse to go on living.

More important than obtaining the trust of his customers was it for Yossel to retain God's trust in him, that God Who alone knew how hard was the lot of the Jew.

It is not of much importance to the record, but I am greatly inclined to believe that the idea of a "flight-from-this-life-which-is-no-life" first occurred seriously to Yossel on one of these business tours. Dreamily, in a rapture of anticipation (and if I know him at all his heart must have contracted and missed a beat at the very thought), dreamily and with rapture, at first very vaguely and then more intently, and ever more passionately, he must have thought about a far-off land to flee to, a land where even a Yossel Fishman could lead a peaceful life; where one is a human being first, and then a Jew; where the peasants, too, are cleverer than in this land, and where a Fishman is worth as much as a peasant.

Unfortunately we must assume that these thoughts of flight cannot have had a favorable effect on his business transactions. In such circumstances the dynamo is liable to come to a dead halt; to which I must add that in any case I never considered my father a very energetic businessman. Galician Jew though

he was, he was less a businessman than those who have made a business of anti-Semitism. And this fact stood out more and more crassly as he began to meditate earnestly on his profession, his country, his customers, and his family. When you're on business, dreaming is out of place. You have a voice, you're supposed to use it; you have features, they're supposed to change their expression at least sixty times to the minute. No good will come of it if you are in the middle of a Polish or Ruthenian farmyard for the purpose of selling barbed wire and, instead of concentrating on barbed wire, you concentrate on emigration to America. The "tempting offer" is sure to lose its swing. Yossel pauses too often, like a man afflicted with asthma. But what he is afflicted with is only a dream, but, oh, such a beautiful dream. Pauses are a ruination to every sales talk. Anyone who has been a traveling salesman knows that. Because, in between, the "other fellow" can think the matter over, and that's bad. He may, for instance, hit upon the thought: "Well, now, why must I buy my barbed wire from this Jew, this kike, this sheeny? Aren't there plenty of others?"

There was another factor, a very serious one. Here I must skip a couple of years. I was already in the world and I remember quite clearly that during the scene that I am about to describe my weeping mother took me in her arms and held me so tight that I began to scream as if I were being murdered.

Here is how the thing fell out:

It happened that one day my father came home with his face all bloodied. On examination it proved that he had two holes in his head. You do not need much imagination to conjure up quite clearly the panic that ensued. The day before, he had come home with a ripped-up coat because one of the peasants had failed, out of "negligence," to chain up his dogs; on this day it was not just the coat, it was his head.

Ah, yes, on the subject of dogs . . . My father never found out how to put up with those animals. He had not the slightest idea how good they could be. In Galicia their training had been directed against "sheenies," and my father was just one of the "sheenies," that is to say, a natural victim. I was profoundly shaken once when I happened to witness a "discovery" that my father made: until the age of fifty he believed that dogs could only bite. It was only then that he "discovered" that a dog can likewise wag its tail peaceably and eat sugar out of one's hand. Up till that point in his life he always made a wide circle so as not to have to pass by a dog. Fear awoke in his bones when he heard a canine growling or barking in the distance. Until then *all* dogs bore for him the aspect of deadly pogromists. "A dog is a born anti-Semite—and vice versa," he said for years.

Well, there my father stood, his face all bloody. What had happened? Nothing out of the way, sighed Yossel, he had only asked for his money after having waited eighteen months.

Mother, holding me tight to her, cried: "You're not going to the villages any more!"

Pitifully my father said: "Do you think I like it? Do you think such a life makes me happy? Do you think I want always to be a target?"

Malka sobbed: "Go away to Germany, or to America."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Leib, mistrustfully. "Do you really believe that it's better somewhere else? You don't get peace for the asking even in the west. To be a Jew means just that: never to hear an insult, to play the deaf-mute, to master yourself, everywhere. For a young man it isn't easy, I know it, I haven't forgotten it yet. But in time you get used to it. . . ."

"But I don't want him to get used to it," wept my grandmother Malka. "I want him to be happier than we've been."

These discussions, which had become a daily habit with the

Fishmans, something like the benediction after the meals, these discussions can be understood only by bearing in mind the proportions which emigration had assumed at that time among the east-European Jews. Merchants migrated, Jewish wage-earners, shoemakers, scribes, porters, poor Jews, rich Jews, young, old, men, women. . . . "Really, who can bear these beatings all his life? Why, the *goyim* here are born with a stick in their hands against the Jews. Overnight the evil impulse breaks out among these devils. In Russia, next door practically, there's a bloody pogrom every year. No, we're not going to wait. It's a horrible life, this inward-eating fear of persecution, this paralyzing, brooding questioning: who knows what might happen tomorrow, or even today?" Every ghetto passes the wretched hours in these meditations. But desperate thoughts like these forced the Jews, and still force them, to seek escape from their imprisoned existence.

In this connection I recall now a cry that my father uttered about this time, one which I have never forgotten, but have retained word for word:

"I'll break stones somewhere, I'll carry heavy burdens, I'll starve, only not to stay here."

Undoubtedly more than one reader must by now have missed the word "Fatherland" in the vocabulary of the Fishmans. It is proper to record that for the majority of the Jews of Strody the concept "Fatherland" hardly existed in this connection. One must know the history of Galicia, which is inhabited by several racial groups, and which in the time of the Fishmans was one of the provinces of the Habsburg monarchy, now no more—one must know the history of this land in order to appreciate why neither the Jews, nor the local Poles and Ruthenians of the period prior to 1914, could have a definite concept of the word "Fatherland," such as is current, let us say, among the inhabit-

ants of a unified national and cultural territory like Germany or France. At most they bore in mind Franz Josef I, the old Kaiser. He was held in honor by the Galician Jews. Of him they spoke with high respect because they knew that he too was an unhappy man, that he had known much suffering in his life, almost as much as a son of the Jewish people—this gray, tormented old man.

On innumerable occasions I witnessed in my childhood how the Jewish soul, which identifies itself wholly and instantly with every sad heart everywhere in the wide world, which has so much fellow-suffering for every sufferer, pitied the venerable Kaiser. Alas, he was powerless even within his own family, so weak is earthly power. No one paid any attention to him, everyone in the Hofburg lived, married, loved, and died as he pleased. "Dear Kaiser Franz Josef, you understand us and we understand you—and every man must help himself."

Since they did not see before them a powerful, protective state, there was really no reason why they should see a Fatherland. Mourning, they often compared this land to which God had exiled them with the ruined land of their prophets. Then their hearts were shaken by the thought of all the wisdom that had reigned once in Canaan and, sobbing, shrank from the spectacle of the wretchedness in which they lived. . . .

But let me not anticipate my story.

Grandparents

THE subject of emigration was first raised among the Fishmans about half a year after the wedding. Then an incident occurred which exercised no small influence on the discussions. That incident was I. My presence within my mother's body had begun to make itself noticeable.

Emigration, then, had been talked about often enough before, but we had not emigrated. Emigrate? One doesn't pick up and leave as easily as all that. There is not only the inertia of human beings; there is forgetfulness, too. As long as the rain is coming down and you're getting wet to the skin, you swear like a dragoon and promise yourself a hundred times to buy an umbrella, or maybe even two. But hardly has the sun begun to shine again when you forget the wetness and the promises and the umbrella.

That was how it went in Strody: "An umbrella? What on earth for? It isn't raining. Maybe there won't be any more rain at all this year. So wait a little bit, children. There's always time to buy one later, too."

It went, likewise: "Emigrate? What on earth for? I grant you, until a week ago there was no living with the peasants. But look, for the last eight days we've had perfect peace, thank

God. Wait a little bit. Maybe it's all for the best to remain."

("But maybe to remain means to ruin my whole life? What shall I do? What's to be done? How is a man to know what he ought to do? He knows nothing. . . .")

Even before I came into the world certain sharp lines had formed on grandmother Malka's face, but the lines were in her skin, not in her soul. Leib, my grandfather, had already begun to age visibly, his shoulders sagged forward wearily, while his wife, as it seemed, was taking, inwardly at least, a new lease on life. I loved and admired her greatly, this grandmother of mine. For the majority of women the kitchen door is the frontier of their world, but for her there were really no frontiers. A frontier to her thoughts? Such an idea could not even occur to her!

Many women of her age are already pictures of wretchedness and decrepitude, but Malka showed her children and, above all, her husband Leib, that growing old was a matter of temperament. Let him take her as an example!

On a certain afternoon Malka was once again turning the leaves of those two books which, in that epoch, could frequently be found in the homes of Galician Jews. They were two German volumes, much read in: one by a Herr von Schiller, the other by a Herr Lessing. As often as she glanced through the yellowing pages she rose, for the entire ensuing week, into a mood of enthusiasm that she loved to transmit to all the household (including, later, her grandchildren). That very evening, shortly before supper, she stood at the kitchen stove and assured her daughter-in-law, who was busy washing the plates, that no doubt one could find in Strody plenty of shallow, unintelligent ne'er-do-wells who longed for the big-city life of Lemberg, with its dances and noise and laughter and theaters, but that there were also at least as many serious and thoughtful people who had no use for that kind of hullabaloo, and were filled with

one desire only—for knowledge: "Because happiness comes only with knowledge . . ." She hoped that her daughter-in-law belonged to the second class.

"Have you understood everything I've just told you?" Malka wanted to know at the close of her caustic lecture (she loved such lectures, the good soul).

Leah assured her hastily that she had understood every word, every thought, and "speaking for myself, I have absolutely no use for that kind of hullabaloo," she added. Then she asked, a little shyly, whether she could take three cucumbers that evening instead of two.

Later, before the crackling fire, Malka sniffed about, like a hunting dog after quarry, for a fitting opportunity to unloose her enthusiastic admiration for the western world. I believe she held forth to me on this, her favorite subject, when I lay wrapped in my cradle. She loved everything that was westward of Strody as a young girl turns in her thoughts to an oft-mentioned beautiful stranger. When she rose to this mood she made the impression of being the youngest in the family.

"Over there life is as clear as glass," she said, enthusiastically. "It is as clear as polished silver on the Sabbath eve, it is like new Passover crockery."

Leib stared skeptically into the flames, taking on, as he nearly always did on this subject, the role of the adversary. "You and your west! Don't read so many books! Don't turn the children's heads! Better read a newspaper! Read about the things that happen daily in 'your west,' you old fox. How robbers go around stealing and murdering in broad daylight in Paris and New York and even in Vienna! What have you to say about that? Instead of your books, read about the trials in the big cities!"

Malka turned away to Leah. "You can't talk with men," she

said, disparagingly. "Speak to a blind man about light, it's just as useless. I'm speaking about civilization and he speaks about trials."

"Your civilization," answered old Leib, contemptuously. "We've got our anti-Semites everywhere, the only difference is the kind of light they thrash you by. Here we still use kerosene—and over there they already use gas." He accented the word "gas" contemptuously, as if he were speaking of a murderer.

Malka became quite excited.

"And Germany, and Lessing, Herr Lessing? And Nathan the Wise? Is that nothing? Is it all nothing?"

"I don't even want to know your educated writers," answered Leib, indifferently. "I only know that people here aren't bigger rascals than anywhere else. We don't lock the doors here, but there's exactly the same amount of stealing as in the west. And maybe you've already forgotten the way they tortured Dreyfus, in *your* west!"

Malka was not to be downed.

"But look how they fought for our Dreyfus over there!"

"Because he wore a uniform," Leib threw in poisonously. "They don't go to all that trouble for poor Jews. For them they collect passage money."

Just as the argument was about to take a sharper turn something suddenly intervened that forbade further dispute. For some time already Leah had been feeling unusual changes taking place within her. She felt sick, it was as though her insides were turning over, a fine sweat broke out on her forehead.

In a flash Malka forgot the west, its civilization, and Captain Dreyfus. Only her daughter-in-law existed for her now. Curt and decisive she sent the two awkward men from the room ("What helpless creatures men are!") and sat down by Leah.

The fire still glimmered and caressed the feet of the women with kindly warmth. On the window-panes the night frost had begun to deposit the outlines of its ice-tapestry. The sound of the wind playing with the snow penetrated into the room.

Malka, letting minute after minute pass in silence, seemed to remember her west once more.

"Your child mustn't remain here," she adjured her daughter-in-law. "I don't want him to grow up in this place. You can't be happy here, you just can't. . . . Take for instance Chaim Nadel. He's nothing but an old man with a gray beard and a bent back, but even him they won't leave in peace. Once he took the train to Lemberg. When he stepped out on the platform a handsome, fresh-washed officer spat right into his face. Why? There isn't any why about it. That officer and gentleman wasn't running any risk. He can permit himself his little 'joke' with a dirty old Jew. And a Chaim Nadel is no Dreyfus, he's no fighter. So he wiped his face and said: 'Mister Officer, it seems to be raining. . . .'"

Leah trembled. "When I think of my child . . ."

"We have to bring up our children in such a way that they'll spit back," said Malka, embittered, raging. "Only away from here."

"But where?" asked Leah, helplessly.

"It's all the same, but away from here. To some educated people. To Germany, or to America. What do you expect here? Here the people are just as they were five hundred years ago. A little while ago they put trolley-cars on the streets in Lemberg, but the idiots were afraid to ride on them. They thought it was Jewish black magic or the Devil's chariot, which would take them straight to hell. The first few weeks they had to use 'traveling guests,' who got their tickets for nothing and something on top of it to pay for their time. Imagine what it was like in

that 'metropolis'; how the trolleys went crawling through the streets, one more cautious than the other, to show how harmless they were, moving like snails past the gaping Lembergers, who were astonished that the things didn't explode. They lay down on the ground and looked up with their stupid eyes to find out whether it wasn't really the Devil or the Jews who made those carriages go through the streets without horses. . . . That's the way life is here. The people here are as stupid as they were five hundred years ago. That's why they're anti-Semites, the idiots . . ."

"Please stop," Leah begged her. "It's moving again. . . . I do believe the child can hear when somebody shouts. . . ."

"It won't do it any harm to hear what I'm saying," Malka declared, hotly. Then she fell on her son's wife with countless kisses.

"Everything for the child," she laughed through her tears.

Childhood

AND it was not long before the moment came. Really, you would have said that it was only yesterday that the whole story took place, it was only yesterday that Aaron Amtmann, the traveling salesman, came with the photograph wrapped in tissue paper and, winking knowingly, put it down on the counter wet with water and brandy, that photograph of a sad-smiling girl. . . . And then (you remember?) there was that merry wedding in Strody, and the girl became a wife. Her life took on meaning and an aim, a today and tomorrow. And now this young wife was to become a mother.

One twilight hour, three days before the arrival of the child, Leah and Yossel sat at the window. They sat hand in hand in the pale darkness, the stars had not yet come out in the sky over them, and they already dreamed of the child that the young wife carried in her. Every two minutes Yossel asked in anxious tones:

“Are you sitting right, Leah? Are you dressed warmly, Leah? You’d better put another shawl on your shoulders, Leah. Do be careful, Leah. Perhaps it isn’t right for you to be sitting here at the open window, Leah? Is your back warm, Leah?”

There was a groan, a little cry. She bore a son, me.

My mother hardly screamed; they tell me she went to it willingly, willingly followed the instructions of the midwife Freide Krauthammer, in order to bring me forth into the world. Her dark, rough hair was loosened. The soft gray eyes, now glowing darkly, suffered dumbly.

All that day Yossel looked like every husband whose wife is brought to bed with child: namely, as if he were bringing it forth, and not Leah. So much did he suffer with her, and so bitter were his pangs of conscience in this connection.

All excited, Grandfather Leib shouted at his excited son: "But what's all the excitement about?"

Malka, who happened just for one moment not to be with Leah, asked gaily: "Do you think you're less excited yourself, Mister Grandpa?"

Leah was no longer Leah, she was the mother of Jacob. She gave him her breast, she gave him everything. Whatever she was, whatever she had, belonged to him. She said:

"Quiet, he's sleeping . . ."

Sometimes I long for her. A homesickness for her body, from which I was expelled as from some country that would no longer put up with my presence, but where I would have been so happy to remain, secure, shielded, unperturbed.

For the Fishmans it was "the loveliest day God ever made." Surely all Strody must have come visiting, for who would not gladly share in the joys of a house?

To very few persons is it given to achieve a second time the popularity which they enjoyed as children, especially in their first year. In wide circles far beyond the confines of the Fishman family I was the sole topic of conversation. I repaid this adoration in my own way, putting my diapers to generous use, for I

suffered with a delicate stomach. Strody spoke of me (and who dares to doubt this?) as of a being who by his mere existence gave full guarantee of a promising career. Well, thus it is with every beginner on this earth. It is not only at the graveside that the family lies so readily: it begins with the cradle. Grown-ups, when they saw me laugh, were transformed into children. They declined into melancholy when I slept. They clapped their hands like loonies when I screamed because I was lying in the wet and nobody would notice it (till finally someone smelt it). They pulled faces to put me in good humor (or so they thought; actually they frightened me). They danced, they whistled, they rolled their eyes like calves chewing the cud, they lived only for me and with me.

I re-create in my imagination the way this first year of my life passed for the Fishmans, how they treated me, wrapped me around, brought me up, spoiled me. How they crowed with joy when I turned my head, and how they crowed with joy when I didn't turn my head! Every new movement they discovered in me was proclaimed with loud cries and much rubbing of hands. It slipped their attention that they too became older by a whole year.

Leah, the mother, asseverated proudly: "When you dry him, he stops crying."

"Naturally," the grandmother made merry over her daughter-in-law. "What else did you expect?"

"He already notices the light," asserted the happy grandfather.

"Did you see that! Look! Look!" cried Grandma to her son Yossel. "Just look at him! He's lying on his stomach and lifting his head up."

"When I take the breast away from him," said the mother to the father, "he stays with his mouth open."

For a whole year they talked of nothing but the child.

"If you give him a good talking to, he understands you."

"He listens to every little noise."

"Just look at the way he's staring at the lamp!"

"Quick! Cover his eyes! Quick! He can spoil them, God forbid."

"How beautifully he holds his head already."

"When I carry him around he wants to see every little thing."

"Well, don't forget he's three months old already."

"Mother, what was I like when I was three months old?" asked Father.

"Cleverer than now, son," answered Grandmother.

"Did you see? Did you see? I called him and right away he began to look for me! Oh, my little one!"

"If he knew you better, you old bear, he surely wouldn't have looked for you."

Father to Mother: "He prattled to himself today; he prattled 'Mama.'"

"You, the things you hear! A baby of four months can't say 'Mama.'"

"I didn't say he *said* it, I said he prattled it," Father defends himself and his son.

Grandfather: "He absolutely insists on having my beard, what do you know about that?"

Grandmother: "It's not your beard especially; he wants to have everything."

"Today he took hold of my watch, with one hand."

"Well, don't forget he's five months old already."

"He already understands everything. If you pull an angry face he cries. When you laugh, he laughs too."

"I can be as angry as I like," says the mother, "but he still kicks his diapers off."

"Leah, Leah! Come quick! He's sitting!!!"

"Oh! When you hold him up! He's been sitting that way a long time."

"Oh, my little one, my Jacob . . ."

"Well, what do you know about that! I want to blow his nose for him and he pushes my hand away!"

"When a child is eight months old," titters Grandpa, "it already has quite a feeling for people, Mrs. Grandma."

Grandma to a visitor: "Look at the way he's crawling. Did you ever see the like of it!"

"God bless him!" says Leah, the proud mother. "He already crawls like a regular grown-up."

"Like a grown-up?" asks the visitor, stupid and astonished. "Since when do grown-ups crawl?"

"Anyway," declare Grandma and Leah, both genuinely wounded, "anyway, our baby . . ."

In the first year of Jacob's life the following additional remarks and observations were added to the record:

"Why do you force him to eat?" growls Grandpa. "You know very well that when he's hungry he puts his lips out."

"Oh, you, what do you know about it?" the clever woman instructs her utterly foolish husband. "He doesn't do that when he's hungry; he does it when he wants me to sing."

Grandpa: "Your singing!"

"He opens every box!" Grandma declares. "You've got to hide everything from him."

"And that doesn't help much, either, he crawls into everything now," the mother observes. "He sits up by himself. He can stand up, too."

"You've still got to hold him up. It's better for him not to stand by himself yet," says Grandmother, for she remembers it all from her own Yossel. "A baby has soft bones."

"I believe that my baby already has lovely, hard bones," Leah returns.

For the first time there's something like a quarrel between Leah and Malka. The subject at issue is my bones. Whether they are already hard enough, or are still too soft. In reality the dispute relates to the whole child. Not merely to its bones.

"But Mama only means it for the best," says Yossel to the weeping Leah.

"And don't I?" asks Leah.

Yossel, after a very long pause: "Leah, today he said: 'Mama . . .'"

Quite won over, Leah says: "Oh, you heard it too!" Then she goes to Malka and says in a little voice: "I was very silly before, Mama."

"Silly? You stood up for your Jacob."

Thereupon Leah kissed first the child, then Grandmother Malka.

"All the same, I advise you to be careful about his bones."

"Yes, you still have to hold him up," says Leah, proffering

the olive-branch. "A child has soft bones, after all. . . . You're right, of course."

In the night that followed the memorable day when I took my first free steps, Leah confided to the unsuspecting Yossel:

"I believe . . . There's something moving about again . . . in me . . ."

The second boy was given the name Hirsch.

When I think back to childhood in Strody I see a room, and a bed, in which I lie with my younger brother. We are still awake, it is very dark, both of us are still little and we are afraid to be alone. We shout at the top of our lungs till Mama comes. In one hand she carries a flat, enamel candlestick, in the other a prayerbook. She sits down with us, calms us, reads forth the night prayer for us to repeat after her, but not before we've put on our caps.

Then she begins to tell us little stories about a jolly wedding fiddle, or about Father and a peasant called Yanek, or about Lemberg and a rich uncle and a poor relative. In winter she rubs our ice-cold feet with snow, then with an anti-frost unguent, so that they should not get frost-bitten.

When Mother came to us in the room like that we were never afraid, even when she told us strange stories. She did not leave the room again until we were both fast asleep.

When I was three years old I was sent to the children's Hebrew school or *cheder* of Mottke Reich, the *melamed* or teacher: a pitiful little pedagogue who, in a single room measuring four yards square, initiated some forty or more children of the townlet of Strody, between the ages of three and thirteen, into the mysteries of the sacred tongue. He yelled and thrashed the Hebrew alphabet into the little ones, like myself, the Hebrew prayers into the older ones. At the age of six I had to repeat by

heart, in the original Hebrew, whole chapters of the prayerbook, page by page and paragraph by paragraph. When a boy had mastered these he was put to the more difficult task of the Five Books of Moses, the Kings and the Prophets, likewise—what was more important—the biblical commentary of Rashi. The translation of these works into Yiddish occupied the boy until his thirteenth year, and the actual studying was carried on in a monotonous chant which has remained in my blood until this day, like the melodies my mother sang to me in the cradle.

These one-room schools, these village cheders, have been described often enough; and the cheder of Mottke Reich the melamed, who yelled at us and from time to time plied his frightful cat-o'-seven-tails on our shoulders when we urchins had not learned our difficult lessons by heart—this cheder and this melamed were surely neither better nor worse than others of their kind in eastern Europe. More than once I saw—and I have never forgotten the picture—how this harsh melamed, the tyrant of our youthful years, stood trembling like a guilty school-boy in the presence of his scolding wife, and even of his sixteen-year-old daughter. Both of them—and here was a phenomenon which inspired me with my first doubts regarding “absolute authority”—were without a vestige of respect for him, and treated him, in front of the tittering pupils, with indescribable contempt.

It was in this cheder that I witnessed the first police raids of my life.

At that period the Austrian Government was campaigning against these Jewish schools; most of them were small, airless, and unhealthful, and we pupils were packed into them by the dozen like sardines into a tin. These governmental descents enabled me to discover at the age of four, and with the help of the older boys, a certain peculiarity about the state power; to

wit, that it was not inevitably and by its nature open-eyed, but that it could, at bidding, half or even completely close its eyes. For the police, under the direction of our old friend Róman, did not take this duty too pedantically, and we children knew, on each separate occasion, how much had been paid.

Whenever warning of a raid was given, for such and such an hour on such and such a day, we youngsters stayed in hiding, just as a matter of form; we stood quietly in the little street behind the teacher's house, we held our breath, we did not stir, we waited, like mice driven into a corner, until the familiar signal advised us that the police had evacuated the field and that our brief interval of freedom was now at an end.

Only much later did it occur to me that I obtained a premature, a much too premature glimpse of the powers that be in their nakedness.

As to the energetic daughter of the melamed, she became my private teacher after my sixth year; on express instructions from my grandmother, she came regularly to the house and gave me lessons in Polish but, above all, in German.

Zhitomir

I CAN no longer be exact on this point, but I cannot have been more than four and a half years old when a strange man appeared in our house, and with his appearance set in motion a series of important events.

A relative of my mother, a young man from Zhitomir, in Volhynia, had come for a brief farewell visit. A pogrom, I was told, had driven all the Jews from Zhitomir. ("What's a pogrom?" I asked, thirsty for knowledge. "Better for you not to know." "But I want to know." "You'll be told when you're older.") Mother's cousin had fled across the Russian frontier. First he went to a place called Sokal, where he hoped to find certain distant relatives; there he was told that these relatives had been living for years in a city of the name of Chicago, or something like that, which was in America. Thereupon the young man went to Lemberg, to Meyer Blum. The latter advised him to do what so many other refugees from Zhitomir were doing, namely, emigrate to America. After all, what was he to do in this country? Where was the wisdom in exchanging Zhitomir for Galicia? Young people like this Lezer Seltzer had to make a real job of emigration, right out of Europe and all the

way to America, where "American riches" lay waiting for able young fellows.

Thus Meyer Blum and his friends to the young man from Zhitomir. They collected passage money for him.

That was a happy time: no visas, no permits, no immigration formalities. The man who is being persecuted, who is being harassed, who has to save himself, *can* save himself, *is permitted* to save himself. America was a great magnet for all seekers, for all the unfortunate, for all industrious wanderers with higher aspirations. There, in America, modern industrialism was to be found. There thousands of factories stand, thousands of workshops, where a man begins small, yes, in the smallest way, among the workers (no one asks: Jew or Christian. Whoever wants to work *can* work, *may* work, *should* work, *will* work . . .). And then he begins to rise, always higher and higher, maybe to the manager's desk and maybe—who knows?—till he actually becomes the owner. A Jew has brains, hasn't he? A Jew is conscientious and honest, isn't he? Lezer Seltzer intends to work over there, on the other side, he intends to earn money, lots of it; America lures, calls, beckons. The work that is open to every man carries with it the promise of affluence, advancement, money, a happy, carefree life.

The arrival of Lezer Seltzer in Strody was the turning-point in the life of the Fishmans. He stands out quite clearly in my memory, this visitor, who was anything rather than a cheery visitor. His face never responded when someone laughed. His chin dropped with a painful jerk when a door banged to. His clothes hung loosely on his body and his hands groped and wandered as they lay on the table. It is only now that I understand this nervousness, for I have myself become an emigrant, I too, persecuted and hunted, have set out on the ancient travels of all Jews.

The Fishmans begged him to stay a week with them. They prepared their best room for him, the one with the balcony. When, in the evening, we were gathered with him about the table, no one spoke of Volhynia. Just as they had once refrained from mentioning Kishinev, so they now refrained from mentioning Zhitomir. They spoke, not of "yesterday," but of "tomorrow," of "the west," of "America." They spoke of "wheat," which was becoming dearer from year to year. They spoke, too, about us children, but when they spoke about us they had the frightened feeling that they were already saying too much, and they glanced furtively at the guest out of the corners of their eyes.

The refugee sat at the table of strangers and dreamed mournfully. Before his eyes there rose once more the dark Volhynian days. He could see again those officials who, as far back as 1905, came from St. Petersburg to Zhitomir; again he heard those men, pot-bellied, hairy-handed, at their work of agitation and incitement; he saw them at their work of diverting into another, never-dried channel, the torrents of bitterness which rose ever higher and higher in the wretched, suffering, poverty-stricken population against the all-powerful generals.

He heard them bellow amid wild applause:

"It's the Jews who are to blame for our defeat in the Russo-Japanese War! It's only the Jews! For the Jews are the enemies of the Little Father, the Tsar—and that means that they're the allies of his enemies, the yellow race."

It's the same filth everywhere, dear reader.

Years afterwards he could still imagine himself in those smoke-filled peasant inns in which the wildest legends shot up like toadstools.

He could hear the curved sabers of the police agitators drag-

ging along the sidewalks, could hear the carriers of these sabers spreading inciting reports at every street corner:

"Do you know that the Jews are planning to blow up our cathedral?"

"Do you know that the Jews need Christian blood for their wine-casks and their bread?"

There came to his ears, across the nightly confusion of the Old City streets, the gasping breath of hunted ghetto-dwellers.

He heard the dull fall of an exhausted body and the shrill howling of the persecutors:

"Beat him to death, boys! He's still breathing!"

He could see them, shortly before dawn, bursting into the dark streets of the Jews and falling upon the locked and bolted houses. He saw before him the thirty old Jews whom the plundering mob dragged along because it could not lay its hands on young ones.

And the refugee Lezer Seltzer sighed deeply, thinking of the thirty shorn beards that the Jews found the next morning in the market-place. Thirty beards; but the compassionate river brought up only eleven corpses.

So the guest sat at table and his dispirited eyes were fixed heavily on the eastern wall of the room. "Zhitomir lies over there," my mother must have been thinking. All the Fishmans were thinking of Zhitomir, but no one uttered the word.

Grandmother consoled him (but what kind of consolation was that for us?):

"Yesterday there was a pogrom in your town, tomorrow it will be here."

"One is a Jew, one must suffer," was Leib's contribution. "And anyway, as long as the Kaiser Franz Josef lives . . ."

"And suppose, God forbid, Franz Josef should die tomor-

row?" asked my father. "What then, when he finally dies? It's no sort of life here, with the peasants! Only yesterday . . ." and he began to lament and upbraid.

"If I were as young as you, children . . ." said Malka, and her lips hurt.

"What are you people talking about?" Leib worked himself up. "Lemberg isn't Zhitomir!"

"But tomorrow there can be pogroms in Lemberg, and here in all Galicia, just like in Zhitomir, and bigger ones, too," Malka interrupted him.

"Nonsense," said Grandfather Leib, offhandedly, to make it easier, everyone could see. "You paint everything blacker than it is."

"Just the same . . . for our children . . . I've been thinking of it a long time," said my father, Yossel, hesitantly.

"Why don't you go to Germany?" asked Malka of young Seltzer.

"I don't know why. I could in fact go to Germany, too. But maybe one day there'll be the same misery in Germany, the same baiting, the same baiters, as in Volhynia. One man in Lemberg advised me against Germany. I don't remember his name, but he was a man with a clever head on him. He said that Berlin, and this place here, they're pretty much the same; they don't like us here and they don't like us there. Because over there they also shout: 'String the Jew up!' I don't know. I'd rather not go to Germany. I don't want to come into a strange country, be there five or ten years, and then have to flee again."

"No! No!" protested Malka. "Germany is a cultured country! There's a Herr Lessing there, who wrote a great Jewish drama. No! No!"

"Does this Herr Lessing live in Berlin, Frau Malka?" —

"Unfortunately I believe he's dead," said my grandmother regretfully.

A day later our parents, red-eyed, told us that the visitor had gone to America. At parting he had promised to write soon, and he made this promise with special emphasis to my father.

To Emigrate or Not to Emigrate

OFTEN we hear or read how the lives of two people unroll like a drama on the stage. With the best will in the world I cannot apply this description to the life of my grandparents, if only for the reason that one of them hardly ever let the other finish his or her remarks. No, they made no exits or entrances, they never went in for the "gesture of wordless despair," or for that well-known "moment of threatening silence which seems to last an eternity," or the "terrifying stare," the purpose of which is to make visible to the public the inward agitation of the actors. They lived, loved, and quarreled without the interference of dramatic rules or director's instructions. For all that I cannot say that I ever found it boring to watch them and listen to them.

When my grandmother Malka sat over a book, completely immersed in a world which seemed to her to be so much juster and more interesting than the world of Strody; when her cheeks flushed like those of a young girl, while her wig, which she wore out of piety, slipped forward challengingly over one ear and lay slantwise on her clever forehead; when, from time to time, she interrupted her reading with enthusiastic "Ah's" and "Oh's," and her eyes began to shine like those of a bride on the day of

her first kiss; and when my grandfather happened to come across her sitting like that in some corner of the house—then he prowled around her as an infuriated tomcat might prowl about a tree on which sits dreamily perched some familiar winged enemy of his; with the air of just such a tomcat, animated by the single desire to outwit and overwhelm the “beastly thing,” but inspired likewise with a wholesome fear of its fighting qualities.

Venomously he asks: “Are you back in your Germany again?”

Venomously she returns: “Yes, I’m back with my beloved writers,” shoves her wig back into place with a gesture of disparagement, and reads on.

The more Malka searched in her books—I was sometimes permitted to bring these four or five massive German tomes, thick, well-worn, gilt-edged volumes, to her from another room, a privilege that filled me with great pride—the more she read in them, the more of a fighter she became for “the happiness of the children,” as she put it. Wherever she turned now in Strody she felt pent up, everything was in the way, this whole narrow world with its limitations, restrictions, trivialities, absurdities. Often, in such moments of meditation, her heart would contract, and I would hear her sigh: “If I were only twenty years younger . . .”

But my parents were still young, on them she could urge her views, and she gave them no more rest. Every evening when my father sat there with all the fight gone out of him, exhausted, often utterly discouraged, speaking no word, thinking of nothing but his villages—on such evenings Malka began again with her plaints and complaints:

“What kind of life is it here in Strody!”

My grandfather was beside himself at such remarks; he shouted:

"Just look at her, will you? She sounds like a young girl, that mother of yours! And she isn't a bit ashamed of herself!"

And, all provoked, he spat out into the middle of the room, onto the rough wooden floor, and aped her: "What kind of life is it here!"

My parents must have been thinking: "Father is offended; he surely thinks it was meant as a reproach to him," and they must have tried to make peace between the two. But Malka exclaimed:

"You stand in the inn all day long, you can't have any idea of what goes on outside! . . ."

The words had left Malka's mouth before she had thought about their meaning. They were no sooner uttered than regretted, but how could she unsay them?

"Well, of course, I stand behind the counter because I like it," retorted my grandfather. "I just like to stand there and sell herrings and brandy."

Leah came to the rescue. "She didn't mean it that way. She was speaking about something altogether different, but you didn't understand her."

"I've understood her crazy ideas about Germany for a long time," said Leib, contemptuously. "I know you think exactly the way she does. You're only a woman, after all. Crazy ideas! Pah! Women!"

"And you're a man," returned Malka. "It would be silly to admit to a woman that she's in the right."

These disputes occurred over and over again in the Fishman household. During those years there were many Fishmans in Strody, and in the whole of eastern Europe. They felt the allurements in the breezes coming from "over there," breezes laden with the odor of rest and peace and comfort, and they shook,

with ever-increasing impatience, the invisible but tangible walls of their ghetto. It was not only the youth; persons of all ages and all levels of education sought in the concepts of "modernization" (within limits, of course), "being German" (in those days that signified west European—but within limits, of course), and "emancipation" (but within limits, of course) the key to a better life. My grandmother, too, an astonishing instance of feminine vitality, but not an exceptional instance, spoke of "the west" as the Jews in Egypt must have spoken about "the Promised Land." With such utterances she laid the foundation for the emigration of the young Fishmans, for one day, it was certain, Yossel and Leah would go forth.

"You'll have them out there soon enough," growled Leib, and pulled a fat herring apart with his two hands.

"But don't you understand that that's the best thing for them?" sobbed Malka. "Do you think it's going to be easy for me to part with them?"

Leib wiped himself once on the nose, once on the eyes. "Do you want the tail, the head, or the middle?"

"Nothing . . ." Malka wanted to say. But how can a mother utter a word when she must think of the parting with her children, a parting which is bound to come some day?

Leib ate the herring alone, ate every bit of it by himself.

I do not seem to remember that my grandfather returned a sustained and consistent fire to the perpetual bombardment of arguments coming from my grandmother Malka. Nor do I believe it to have been the case even when his grandchildren were not present at the "debates." I am much more inclined to believe that in mobility, aggressiveness, and above all in quickness of thinking he was not quite a match for his wife. He was, to be sure, a sly and crafty innkeeper, but this craftiness of his

was rooted in a conservative nature, not in a clever managerial or aggressive character. It is very likely that he often suffered under this obvious spiritual superiority of his wife and as I write, I, his grandson, recall a couple of characteristic incidents which remove all my doubts on that score.

Once I observed and overheard him—there happened to be no one in the inn—as he stood behind the counter engaged in an energetic monologue. He could not see me, for I was hidden under some table—the old high-legged billiard table, if I am not mistaken.

I am sure that he used to boil inwardly, this good old grandfather of mine, when my quick-witted grandmother would not give him time enough to set up all his objections to “emigration,” one by one, like a row of filled tea-glasses. Hardly had he managed to get out one sentence, speaking with bitter anger and as if personally insulted—he did not speak as swiftly as Malka—when Grandmother came back at him with a whole arsenal of new questions and observations, so that he must have appeared in his own eyes like a man who misses one move after another.

And so I heard him, once, speaking audibly, though he was quite alone, and I am sure I am not far from the truth in believing that he must frequently have helped himself out with such soliloquies. In these uninterrupted intervals of peace, he addressed himself to his wife who, probably to his good luck, was hardly aware of this tragi-comic habit of his.

“Malka, I don’t want you to turn our Yossel and his Leah and their children into ‘modern people,’” he said and, lying under the table, I was astounded to observe how energetic and convincing his words sounded. “Everybody who emigrates becomes a ‘modern,’ but I don’t want that! Do these ‘Germanified’ Jews get more out of life? Take a look at that Dr. Spiegel.

He's forgotten what it means to be a Jew. He shaves, though the Law forbids it. He eats pig and even goes without a hat in the summer, that *goy*. Do you want our children to become such renegades, do you want that?"

Then for a while I heard nothing. Grandfather was probably imagining during this pause that now Malka answered him briefly and reflectively (as *he* always did!), saying: "No, Leib, I believe you are right, my Leib . . ."

Then he spoke again, and it was clear now from his speech that he was happy to have such an understanding wife:

"Well, there you are, I always did believe that you were reasonable. What does all this 'modern' knowledge amount to? It's all useless! This knowledge won't be of any use to them before God, and it won't be of any use to them in this world, either." This last sentence seemed to please him, for he repeated it: "And it won't be of any use to them in this world, either."

"Really, you're absolutely right," was all that Malka could have answered, and old Leib must have rejoiced that anyway she was a clever woman, that wife of his, he had to admit that.

"And now look, Malka. If you keep on urging the children to go west, they'll forget everything." Leib played his last trump card: "They won't even remember how to say their prayers, just like this Dr. Spiegel, who turns a couple of pages quickly when the cantor in the synagogue chants a few words. Do you call that education?"

Here Leib must have pictured to himself how Grandmother would lapse into shamed silence. That would be a great triumph for him, the greatest in his life! Well, after all, he could not stand idly by while we children were being misled. And was he to take it quietly when they wanted to rob him of "the brightest light in his house"? Did he not, in his old age, have some claim to have his children about him? What would he have out of it

if they wrote him letters? He didn't want to receive letters, he wanted to have his children near him. . . .

But perhaps, he trembled inwardly, Malka would say: "Ego-tist!"

He must have passed more than one day in these tormenting soliloquies, my poor old grandfather.

But secretly, when no one else was about, he did, I believe, let her know that he saw things her way. "Those others hate us Jews like the pestilence. They give us no peace here in Strody, and if they only dared they would slaughter us, and today rather than tomorrow. What's to be done, what's a man to do . . . ?"

And so old Leib was flung this way and that.

It was not easy for him.

Parting

ONE day, when I came home from the cheder of the Hebrew teacher Mottke Reich, I found myself completely ignored: contrary to daily usage, no one subjected me to a painful examination in order to determine whether and for how long the unhappy little teacher had been occupied with me, and whether this same Reich did not merely collect the fees without rendering value for them. On that day no one put any of these searching questions to me, my very greeting was ignored. It was already most peculiar that I found neither Grandfather nor any other of the grown-up Fishmans standing behind the counter in the inn. But I was moved in a still stranger way by this penetrating silence of the Fishman family, the old couple and the young, all four of them sitting at the round table and staring at a letter which lay before them.

This letter had been brought, all unexpectedly, by squint-eyed Pinyeh, the letter-carrier. "I've got a letter for you. A beauty! All the way from America!"

"From America?"

"From one Leon Seltzer."

"L-e-o-n? What's that? Leon Seltzer?"

"From Lezer!" cried Mother impatiently, tore the letter from Squint-Eye and ripped the envelope open.

Lezer Seltzer . . . Wasn't it months ago, or maybe a whole year, since he was a visitor in Strody . . . ?

And at last, at long last, this is what he wrote:

"Dear Leah, if your husband wants, let him come to us"—he wrote "to us"!—"in New York. The life here is free and beautiful, it's certainly more comfortable and freer here in America than in Galicia. I've got a good position for him, and he'll be able to work himself up just like all of us." (He wrote "like all of us"!)" "When I visited you, before leaving for America, I got to like your husband very much. I believe you'll be able to find much happiness here, if you're ready to work. They let us carry on in peace, the people here work for their happiness, and if you've got the courage for it you can try your luck here too. But my advice to you is that Yossel should come first, by himself. Afterwards he can have you and the children follow. Your relative, Leon Seltzer."

Well, what can you say about a letter like that?

So he's making out well, thank God, that young fellow from Zhitomir. . . .

He hasn't forgotten us, the dear, good, unhappy boy. . . .

And now his name is Leon, it's no longer Lezer.

And . . . Yossel should come . . . ?

To Amer . . . America . . . ?

Should he go?

But no, no . . .

But yes, yes . . .

But . . .

Let's sit down first . . .

"No," said Grandfather.

"Yes," said Grandmother.

Mother was silent; Father, too, was silent.

All day long Grandmother shouted the same old phrases, the same old arguments into our ears, which already hurt us.

"What is he to do here? Do you want him to do what you did, spend all his young life being tormented by the Yaneks? Do you want him to go on forever selling his wire—which isn't his—here in Strody and the villages? Do you want him to wait, like you and me, for a pogrom, which might break on us any night? And his children! What will become of them when they grow up? Brandy- and herring-sellers, like you? Or wire merchants, like their father? Anyone who loves his children must send them away from here. . . ."

And thus the matter was resolved: Yossel is going to America. He's going all by himself, and he's to write us how it is over there, so that Leah and the children can follow later.

Now a day comes when I am all dressed up, and Grandmother Malka sets out, proudly and sadly, with her son Yossel and with me, her grandson, for Lemberg.

In this city, which was gigantic in my eyes, she bought the ship's ticket for her son.

"He's going to America," she explained to the agent. "That's not so close to Strody, but he'll always be with us," and she cried.

Then she wanted to buy a suit of clothes for Yossel, and she did not cry any more. We went—I standing in a trolley-car for the first time—to the firm of Moses Shapiro.

Every member of the Fishman family conceded without envy that no one could buy things as advantageously as Malka. A man is only a man, but she, so all of them said, had wits enough for ten men.

"I grant you that your father can sell brandy," she shouted; she had to shout because we were all standing on the front

platform of the clattering Lemberg trolley-car. "He knows how to sell brandy, but he'll never know how to buy a suit of clothes. A man doesn't know how to buy things for himself, he can only do business in competition against others. But everyone knows how stupid all men are, it's an old story. Don't you forget it in America, either, my little Yossel."

"Bim, bim," tinkled the trolley-car.

"This is a true story out of Strody. Jake Lachmann used to stand day by day in the market-place with a basket full of bread. But one day he came home without money and without bread . . ."

"What happened?" shouted Father anxiously, and held on tight, as they were on a curve.

"That's just what his wife asked," tittered Grandmother. "This man, this idiot of a Jake Lachmann, tells her this story: 'Dear wife, a big crowd came and upset my basket and each one stole a loaf . . .' 'Pah!' cursed the wife of this Jake Lachmann. 'And why didn't you steal one too, you idiot? . . .' That's how stupid men are!"

"Bim, bim," tinkled the trolley-car.

The firm of Moses Shapiro received us as if we were grand dukes. Father did not utter a word. Only Grandmother spoke.

"I need a suit of clothes for my son," she said in a fine voluptuous tone of voice. "I want you to know, my son is going on a ship, on a very big ship, and he's going a long way, to the other side of the world. So he needs a suit that'll last, something good, the finest of the finest. Let the cost be what it will, the main thing is the quality."

Three men came dragging suits out, dark material, light, dotted, striped, smooth, rough. I stood there, very small, not losing a word of the negotiations.

"For America he needs something good, something handsome and solid," Malka directed coolly, and at the same time, close to tears, she smiled touchingly at her son.

Father tried on ten suits, twenty. Whenever he wanted to say something, Grandmother poked him with her elbow and intervened hastily:

"All right, all right, I'll do the talking for you, I know what you want to say." That's the way Grandmother was, and so her son remained silent.

Then at last, at last, she had the suit.

Moses Shapiro named his price.

Grandmother promptly reduced it by half.

Shapiro thought, craftily: "Just as I thought. These country Jewesses, who have to put up with their peasants, want to haggle. Let her have a good time. I doubled the price anyway."

But suddenly he turned pale.

Grandmother was still haggling.

Another ten per cent.

Another ten.

As inexorable as a field-marshal.

Worse, even.

Moses Shapiro was bathed in cold sweat.

Then, at last, at last, Grandmother said: "I'll take the suit."

"God be praised," stammered Shapiro.

"Amen," Grandmother followed up, piously. "I'll take the suit, but you'll have to add a shirt to it."

The merchant wrung his hands.

"Think of it, he's going to the other end of the world," Malka urged calmly, understandingly, to make it easier for the man. "Just think what sort of journey that is," ran sadly off her tongue. And then a surprise attack took the astonished Shapiro

unawares. "Such a big thing, such a journey, and here you weep over one little shirt."

Pale as a smitten man Shapiro conceded the shirt, too. While paying, this "frightful woman" haggled a tie out of him as make-weight.

"But really, that's the last," gasped Shapiro. "These women!"

We went back to Strody. Throughout the journey Father held onto the parcel with his suit, while Grandmother held in both hands the ship's ticket, her son's destiny. I sat tinily between them and fell asleep from exhaustion.

The days that followed went by as on wings. There was packing and weeping and weeping and packing, and in the nights they could not sleep. Only we children, Hirsch and I, slept as in normal times.

Everyone walked on tiptoe and listened to his own footsteps, so orphaned did the house already seem, though Father was still in Strody. Grandfather Leib dozed off, exhausted by his struggles with Grandmother and my parents; he was beaten. But Malka too, victorious though she had been, ran back and forth through the rooms, sparing of her words, and from time to time she sat down and let her hands dangle between her knees. Now that everything had turned out the way she wanted it, her heart suddenly pained her.

Our parents took us, their two children, by the hand, and in the parched heat of a June day the four of us went down to the river. We walked parallel with the stream, which moved lazily in the opposite direction. The sand burned under our feet. As they went along, our parents kissed each other and us.

Mother spoke, Father spoke, both of them seemed to be hoarse. We children walked in front. The wind carried their words to us.

"Where will we be in ten years . . . ?"

"And our children in twenty years . . . ?"

We took a path across the fields. We sat down in a meadow. Father spoke softly, pleadingly, to our weeping mother. But he was bolstering his own courage, too, not only hers. Helplessly she leaned her head against his breast, he stroked her hair, her rough, dark hair.

"I'll work a lot in America," he said.

"But don't overwork, little Yossel. . . . You must promise me that. . . ." Mother was afraid.

"Of course, I'll look after myself. . . . And then, when you and the children are with me . . ." Father began to outline the lovely promise.

The world sank into the far, far distance. . . .

"How do you picture it to yourself?" asked Mother. "How do you picture your life in America . . . all by yourself? . . ."

"I don't know yet," confessed Father.

Then he said uncertainly: "You hear so many stories. I'll save up. First for a ship's ticket, then for the future of our children."

"I know somebody from Kishinev," Mother confided, "who became terribly rich over there. A great lawyer. An important man . . ."

"I'll be content if our children have an easier time," confessed Father. "If, later on, they can become what they like. All I want for you and me is a place of our own to live in, in New York, our own place. . . ."

"But you won't overwork, my little Yossel . . . ?"

"I promise you on my word of honor, honestly not, Leah. . . ."

"And you'll write regularly every week . . . ?"

"What? Once a week? I don't know whether that'll be possible," he said hesitantly, honest in his caution. "Letters must

cost a lot in America. Over there you reckon in dollars, see?" (Mother shook her head, meaning "No.") "Oh, well, when you're over there you'll learn soon enough." (Mother nodded dreamily, "Yes.") "But I'll certainly write every fortnight."

"And I'll be waiting so much," said Mother, dolefully and slightly sleepy after all these strenuous days.

"You'll always write me exactly how the children are?" he begged her.

"Yes, Yossel. . . ."

"And our parents . . . ?"

"Yes, Yossel. . . ."

Then both of them dreamed open-eyed of America.

They dreamed of a little home of their own, with a well right in front of the door.

And they might even have gas in one of the rooms.

Whenever they feel like it they can go to a Jewish theater, for they've known for a long time that there are many Jewish theaters in New York.

And they'll visit Lezer Seltzer, whose name is now Leon Seltzer. Or Leon will be coming to their house in the trolley-car, which is no doubt in style in New York.

And the children will become students in a *Gymnasium*, a fine high school. Here in Galicia they say: "What does a Jew need high school for? What's the good of university and education? What should he become a lawyer for? Why should he become a big, important man? Let him deal in old clothes, and rotten butter, and stinking herrings. . . ."

But in America . . . that's a free country . . . there the children will be happy some day . . . oh, to be happy . . .

Oh . . .

So my parents dreamed . . .

Then we suddenly ran home, for a storm-wind was rising on

the meadows. It blew across the fields and bent the stalks, so that it all looked like a sea. It bent the rye stalks and the thistles.

There the first morning train stood on the platform of the little station. The rails shimmered and a lantern hung in the air, swinging on a wire. I sat on the arm of my weeping father, who at that time had a dark beard. And the train conductor had a little lamp fastened on his stomach. A clear little bell shrilled in the station, and the hammer at the barrier began to work on the big iron bell. Father kissed us children, Mother, his parents.

The locomotive hissed furiously from all its vents.

Kisses, weeping, parting, kisses, tears . . .

There the dear familiar faces are, there stands the Fishman family. Here is Yossel's homeland, and he must say farewell, must tear himself away from us. Tear himself away! But he is fastened to us not merely with ropes, which you can undo, unknot; he is grown into us, body into body. Tearing himself away is like an operation, an agonizing process, and perhaps the wound will never heal. . . .

"All aboard!"

Kisses, weeping, parting, parting . . .

People think that a parting lasts only an instant. How mistaken they are! "I'm no good even at a parting," thinks Yossel Fishman, ruefully, sadly. "I imagined it would be much easier. My heart, oh, my heart. It's going to hurt me till the end of my days. . . ."

Father mounted into the railroad car. He stood, lonely, framed by the window. Someone lifted me up. Father kissed me. I proclaimed loudly that his tears tasted salty. I wept with him. Everyone wept.

The engine whistled, long and dolefully. Another instant. A

swallowing down of grief. Oh, we'll be seeing each other again, we'll be seeing each other again . . . The eyes could see no more because of many tears. . . . Only we children could see the train conductor signaling with his little red and green lamp.

There was a thundering and rattling on the rails.

The yellow window frame moved off, the figure of Father within it grew smaller and smaller.

In this instant of actual departure he thought: "No more weeping, Yossel. Be strong. An end to tears . . ."

"Do-without-them, do-without-them, do-without-them," the wheels chorused.

The train disappeared rapidly into the yellow gray mist of the morning twilight.

On the desolate, unwashed platform stood the Fishman family, the remainder of the Fishman family, and stared out as far as America, as far as New York.

Then everyone heaved a sigh. And all wept so unhappily!

(Come, dear Fishmans, come now. The guard's waiting at the gate!

A Jew mustn't keep a guard waiting!

A Jew should know that this kind of thing makes bad blood for *all* Jews!

Quickly!! Quickly!!!)

"Platform tickets!"

We went homeward. This was our townlet of Strody. We children plodded along between Mother and Grandmother. Leib, our grandfather, trotted behind, furious, torn up.

"To make a child happier you've got to separate yourself from him. . . . What a world! . . . Oi, oi, oi . . . I knew better, I did . . . We Fishmans are no good for these adventures, for these partings, for these journeys into the unknown . . . oi, oi, oi . . ."

America

THE ship set forth from the harbor.

Europe sank away, only the sky remained, eternally.

Boldly the sun rose to greet him. Vast and powerful it sank nightly into the distant flood.

For days at a stretch there was nothing to be seen but sky and water, and my father did not see even that much. Passing in his train across the European landscape, with strange cities, valleys, hills, and clouds unrolling before the car window, he had not looked up even once. What further interest had Europe for him? His destination was America, only America. He sat in his compartment, thinking: "I shall work day and night, day and night, in sunshine or in rain, in sickness or in health, I shall keep on working, day and night, night and day, till I have them with me at last."

Now he was on the ship, which, with every thrust of the engine, brought him nearer to his goal. He traveled steerage. He did not want a better class, was what he had said in Strody (Strody! How far away it lies now!). He had not wanted to relinquish the saving to be made by traveling the same distance in the same time as steerage passenger. Had there been a cheaper

way of making the crossing, Yossel would have agreed to it. Before he was actually in America, he was already set to begin saving for "the ship's tickets for the family."

On the ship he saw and heard nothing of importance, he was not interested in the journey, only in the goal, America.

The hard shafts of the engine hammered all night long, all day long, and the blazing heat of the stifling boiler-room penetrated through the ill-fitting joints into the room in which he would have to stay till the ship dropped anchor in New York. He heard from afar the rhythm of music on the upper deck. High up in the air, somewhat below the clear sky, he could see the sun-deck restaurant, the commander's bridge, and a deck-tennis court. But here below he lay jammed in among strange people, he felt like a pickled herring in an overcrowded barrel. Little children wailed, women shamelessly unbuttoned their blouses and stopped up the screaming mouths with warm milk. In the enveloping press of persons, boxes, and roped-up bundles of bedclothes Yossel became aware that he was itching somewhere, and he scratched himself, thinking: "In a few days it will all be over!"

The weather was beautiful throughout the journey, and Yossel wrote to Strody (it lies so far away now, the little town-let!): "The lovely weather, dear Leah, is a good omen for our future."

On the last day he turned his pockets inside out, as before a festival. He threw all the little crumbs into the great ocean and let them swim back to Europe, for he wanted to arrive in America all new and clean.

It was night, he was standing at his little round window, the foaming waves sent their spray up to where he stood, and suddenly he started back in fear. In front of him, in a hole in the water, a fire sign sank away—then rose up high again. Lights

came out of the incredible distance. The fierce lift and fall of the waves flung the fire about, but it was mightier than all the water in the great sea. It shone only for Yossel, for it was late in the night, almost at the turning.

Yossel's cheeks glowed under his beard. That same day a dim, gray strip rose out of the water, and the next morning the ship moved past an island, and opposite the island lay a city that seemed bigger even than Lemberg. The name of this city was New York.

Little sea gulls surrounded in white flight the huge, big-bellied ship. Massive cranes lifted heavy loads at the end of long, thick chains from the bowels of the floating mass, and from the distance big houses, terrifyingly high, beckoned to him.

The fury of New York, a mingled humming, clamoring, ringing, crashing, carried right into the ship, which now lay at rest in the harbor. A confusion of walls and chimneys, of smoke and even of clouds, wreathed about the summits of the loftiest buildings, a confusion such as Yossel had never been able to imagine raged right down to the last reaches of the ocean.

New York, high as the heavens, wide as the world, advanced thus upon him, seized him in its mighty grip, stormed his heart, crowded his brain, laid chains on all his limbs. The breath died in poor little Yossel; he was conquered before he began his battle with this city.

The steerage passengers were the last to land, and Yossel Fishman, from east Europe, set foot at last on American soil.

"Leah," he breathed, crushed, overwhelmed. And then my father became sick.

"Hello, Mr. Fishman."

Yossel received a friendly push on his right shoulder. He stood firm, and a sigh escaped him. He saw in front of him a

man whose name was now Leon Seltzer, and who looked almost like the old Lezer Seltzer. Near this man stood a young woman, who greeted him loudly, but Yossel did not understand a single word, for she spoke "American."

Yossel stammered:

"I'm . . . in America . . ."

"You're tired, no doubt," said the woman in a friendly voice.

Leon Seltzer smiled, and translated, adding: "This is my wife. Her name is Sally."

Yossel was flabbergasted. "Yes," he said, "no, yes." He saw only stones, iron, automobiles, people. Instead of sea and sky he saw now only speed, speed, speed. . . .

Yossel sat dazed in the Elevated, which bore him toward the East Side. His head whirled as he looked out through the window at the long stretch of straight rails. On the crowded sidewalks there was a running and scurrying and pushing of dark and light suits and dresses, of striped and dotted and speckled suits and dresses, into which were thrust restless half-sized people, men and women. Along the middle of the road crawled long worms, which revealed themselves as lines of automobiles and horse-cabs. A ceaseless torrent of motion poured along all the roads. Skyscrapers, cupolas, apartment blocks, stone façades, flashed past the windows of the Elevated. People pushed their way into the cars, sat down, read newspapers, got out; new ones came in, remained standing, read newspapers, got out. Tumult, uproar, rattling, klaxons, deafened Yossel's ears. A mixture of gasoline fumes and perspiration filled the air. Behind a mist which lay like frosted glass over New York he glimpsed faintly, very faintly, a sun, just as in Strody on the river Strýj.

"We'll have to put him on his feet again, Sally. He must surely miss Strody, a piece of meadow and a filthy market-place. The poor man misses his bit of woods, the river, the fields, and

the fresh wind. And there's no need to mention his wife, his children, and his parents."

"I'll do my best to help you," said Leon's wife to Yossel, and pressed his hand.

Yossel turned imploringly to this powerful Leon Seltzer, who was master of such a language.

"What did your wife say?" he asked, anxiously.

Leon translated.

"I'm not feeling so well," said Yossel, embarrassed. His head was hot, his eyes burned as in a fever, they saw nothing but towering columns of stone, wide, massive buildings, four-square. The little man trembled.

"It was exactly the same way with me," Leon Seltzer comforted him. "After a little while you'll learn to take it calmly. Maybe you still need one of those Mister Peasants, my friend," he added, smiling.

Yossel started up; frightened, imploring, he seemed to ward off something.

"I want to begin a new life, I don't want to think of the past!"

"What does he say?" asked Sally.

Leon explained: "He doesn't long for his peasants, he says. So everything is all right."

When the Elevated came to their station and Leon said: "The East Side!" Yossel remained sitting, strengthless.

"Come on out, Joe," said Leon, in English.

"He didn't understand you," his wife reminded him, as she looked at the helpless expression on Yossel's face.

Leon repeated his words. "And from now on," he added, "your name is Joe, because Yossel's no name for America."

But for us he remains Yossel.

Everything was new to him, and yet it was not so completely

new, so completely unfamiliar to him, for on the East Side of this gigantic city there lived with him thousands of Jews who, like himself, had migrated from eastern Europe.

He found a room at once, on the fifth floor of a huge tenement block. When he hesitated, the landlady said to him in his own language: "What's wrong with the place? The price? The fifth floor? You don't know what you want. The higher up you are, the cleaner and stronger the air; up here it's just like Colorado. Why, if you had to live down there, almost on the street, God forbid, you'd die of the stink of goulash and potato pancakes. And, besides, I guess you're a pious sort of young man, aren't you? Well, isn't it better to be up on the fifth floor, right near God and heaven? You see?"

So Father took the room.

There lived, in that same boarding house, Jews from Tarnopol, from Kishinev, from Vilna, from Lemberg, from Zhitomir—Jews like himself, all from east Europe. Non-Jews lived there too, a few Italians, Germans, and Spaniards. A German girl named Mary, who worked as a waitress in a restaurant on the same street, darned his stockings for him. She was a quiet, decent girl.

"Germans are always quiet and decent," they said in the boarding house, "as long as they're by themselves."

"Italians are dangerous," they said in the boarding house, "because they work harder and live on less than even we Jews."

"When you see an Irishman," they said in the boarding house, "give him a wide berth."

"And as for Jews," they said in the boarding house, "they're good to share your last home with—in the cemetery."

It did not take long, and Yossel found himself quite at home in his new surroundings. In the dark and dirty back yards of the tenements the children fought and quarreled in "Ameri-

can"; women sat in front of the doors, on the stoops, and talked about Europe, in Yiddish.

During the first few days Yossel thought his head would crack open with the thunder of the trucks, the hooting of the automobiles, the clatter of the trolleys, the rattle and bumping of the big beer trucks, the shrill clamor of Italian and Jewish pushcart peddlers. But his head did not crack open, and Yossel grew accustomed to the city, as millions before him had done. It is quite true that during the first period Father had a lot to learn. Industrialism, machinery, steel, iron, and then machinery again—it was no light task for him. Often he became even smaller, clumsier, lonelier, quieter, and more embarrassed than he already was. In this helplessness he clung instinctively to the history that had been transmitted to him, to the tradition of the Jewish people, in other words, to that which he had always regarded, in his Jewish life in Strody, as the unique, the great, and the eternal. When thoughts like these flashed into his mind, he gave them free rein, though at the same time he was aware, in the depths of his heart, of a premonitory fear that here, in this place, his ghetto knowledge and his ghetto walls would be of little use to him. It was precisely this fear of contact with the new life in America, this terror, unavoidable as it was, which misled him into passionate, aggressive exclamations like: "Well, so what? So what? And what about our Torah? And our sages? And our learned men, our learned Jews? What do you mean? Do they count for nothing? Does the world consist of nothing but iron, steel, machines, and noise? And what about Rashi? And the Rambam? Is all that nothing?"

One thing held up his free and rapid progress: the new words, the language.

The Jews spoke with Yossel in his own language; at least, the grown-ups did. But, as Yossel observed to his despair, the young

people spoke only "American." During the first few days he understood nothing, literally nothing. And then suddenly he grasped a sound which kept recurring again and again, and which was very much like the first syllable of his name: "Yes." And all at once he was no longer utterly miserable. "Oh, we'll manage, my dear Yossel! Courage!" he said aloud to himself.

He worked as cutter for the firm of Rosenberg Brothers. He learned this trade very quickly, already his scissors flew through the cloth as if he had spent all his life at this work.

"In America," said one of his foremen to him with paternal importance, "in America a young man, if he's only willing, learns things as quickly and as easily as a child. He learns quickly how to spend his money, oh, yes, quicker than how to earn it. It all depends on the character, only the character. You mark my words."

"Just like at home, in Strody," Yossel dreamed gratefully.

With him in the factory worked Jews and also others. They had downright funny names: Smith, Brown, Thompson, White. Some of them Yossel called, briefly: Sam, Sid, John. Him they called Joe, "because Yossel isn't an American name." Nobody ever said "Sheeny!" to Father, and he was so overjoyed that he never failed to allude to this staggering fact in every one of his letters. I believe that out of his joy in this "American life" he overshot the mark; was ready to interpret indifference as liking, as sympathy, even as friendship. He was beside himself with happiness at the slightest indication of courtesy or let us say of friendliness, on the part of a non-Jew, and he wrote us reports several pages long, always ending up with: "In America there are only good people. A thousand kisses. Your Yossel."

There were many clubs and lodges whose membership was based on country or city of origin. Yossel became a member of the "Lemberg Lodge." He was the first Jew to have come to

New York from Strody, and so of course there was no "Strody Lodge."

In America—that is to say in the boarding house, in the Rosenberg Brothers factory, and in the lodge—they said that Yossel was very likable, a "very nice man." "And what does that mean?" he asked. When they explained it to him in his own language he became very embarrassed.

Walking in the street he would think: "Some day I will be living here with Leah."

Looking into the windows of a magnificent department store he would think: "Some day I'm going to show this store to my Leah."

When he ate something good he would think: "Some day I'll eat this here with Leah."

He loved it greatly, this "American life." He loved greatly his "American dream." He loved this dream as one loves a living thing, and for him America was in fact a living thing, for he would often speak to "America" as to a person.

Still I believe that this powerful country did not carry my father along one hundred per cent, for he wanted to wait with the final fulfillment.

"I'll put everything off till Leah and the children are here," was his life in America.

Father understood this thoroughly. Years later, when I asked him about his experiences "over there," he answered: "I had no experiences; I waited. I saved up for your ship's tickets."

He put his money by a dollar at a time. Clean and neat, one bill on the other. Solid bills they were, with good heads engraved on them, good figures, good signatures. Banknotes, each one of which diminished by a mile the distance between us and him. Banknotes which, once consigned to their cardboard box, could never be taken out for personal purposes. He had no

personal purposes. Often he lived for weeks at a stretch on dry bread and fruits, a glass of tea and one piece of sugar a day. This sugar he broke off from a big cone, for it was cheaper to buy it thus than in cubes. But the cardboard box never went short, never knew lean times, for never did six days pass but what one new note at least was consigned to its keeping.

In the evenings Yossel left his room only when he was invited to the Seltzers'. Yet he was less frequently there than one might have expected. Not because Leon Seltzer was not glad to have him. But there was always the question of language. Sally Seltzer was, true enough, the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, but they had been in the country thirty years, and Sally did not speak a word of Yiddish; and Yossel spoke the language of the country too poorly as yet to be able to conduct a satisfactory conversation in it. Thus, when Sally's husband entertained the guest in Yiddish, she had to sit by, speechless, and it was no pleasure to her to interrupt, at the end of every sentence, with the hungry "What did he say?"; nor was it a pleasure to the men to have to answer it. And yet they understood well enough that she wanted to know what they were laughing or arguing about, or what made them sad. And it was equally natural that Yossel and Leon, hearing that timid "What did you say?" should feel guilty and break off the Yiddish conversation.

The situation was reversed when, at the beginning, my father spent a few evenings a week at the Seltzers', wordless and unhappy. Wordless because he could take no part in the conversation which the Seltzers and their friends were carrying on in the language of the country, unhappy because not to be able to understand a conversation, not to be able to participate in it, is painful for any adult.

Now they had fallen on the following practice: Yossel visited

the Seltzers twice weekly, and the men spoke half in Yiddish, half in English. Sally was content to have her husband Leon give her a full report on the conversation later, when they were alone. Now she seldom interrupted the conversation with questions; she could easily understand Yossel's longing for Yiddish conversation because it must have been no different with her father, the Russian Jew. Immigrant pains. Immigrant destiny.

Often there was a third man present at the Seltzers'. My father has given me such a clear picture of this little, crooked person, a former resident of Kishinev, who had known my mother's parents, that I have had my own, private conversations with him in the nights. This hunchback was one of those little discontented people who go around bleating, complaining, knowing everything, and are happy only when their eternal pessimism is vindicated. Not only externally, but internally too, he carried a not inconsiderable hump; there was, in addition, his face—the face of a child covered with a wrinkled, gray skin. Some five or six brownish-red hairs hung from his chin, representing a ragged, pointed, miniature beardlet. But it was on the street that he looked his most dismal. He wore a small overcoat, such as might have been made for a boy of eleven, except that the wide, long sleeves were for the arms of a grown-up. No one had ever seen him sauntering easily through New York's East Side. He was forever in a hurry, he always rushed along with open jacket and overcoat, and those who saw him were put in mind of a sort of fly carried along by a wind not of its own making.

But when all is said, this manikin must have had a clever, superior, even a philosophic head on him, if I am to judge by what I have heard about him. Nor was it lacking in conceit, either. Neither my father nor Leon Seltzer was in the same class with him; they, the "simple immigrants," "Jews from

a village that couldn't even be called European," just could not stand up to this "dangerous intellectual," as the little fellow called himself.

Reassure yourself, dear reader. The arguments of the three Jews did not deal with such themes as "Epicurus's Philosophy of the Good Life," or "Is the Soul a Substantive?"; not a bit of it; they were concerned with very simple problems and doubts. Such as, for instance, "Can one of our kind become a real American? . . ."

It was my father who had raised this question; he was set on knowing what a "real American" had to be like. The question is, after all, not without interest if you are going to settle in the country.

The hunchback, who barely came up to the level of the table, opined, in his thin little voice:

"A real American, my dear friends, must be full of self-certainty; he must be as self-confident as if the whole world were on his side."

Oh, that hunchback! That grin of mockery in human form! That little figure which was nothing but a self-contradiction. That delight in terrifying others. That pitiful little creature laboring to crush every vestige of optimism.

What can his sweeping answer mean, in simple terms, but this: "No, a Jew can never become a 'real American.' The world will never be on the side of the persecuted, hunted, harassed, insulted Jews, he-he-he! . . ."?

My father laid down his weapons. He sat there mournful, crushed, terrified.

But Leon Seltzer would not let himself be intimidated so easily, and he asked hotly: "Exactly what do you mean by 'the whole world,' eh? Do you include the idiots, too?"

"The world—why, that means the whole world, and *basta!*

There's no more to be said," growled the hunchback, like a dachshund accidentally trodden on.

Yossel tried to save whatever could still be saved. He was interested only in a particular application of the question. "Whether I personally can or cannot become a good American isn't important. But my children, my two children, they at least can become 'real Americans,' can't they?"

"Absolutely," the great Seltzer agreed and—wonder of wonders!—the hunchback too, as if both were moved by a single thought. "Can you doubt it? The children will definitely become 'real, true Americans.'"

"Thank you, Mister Kishinev," said Mister Fishman, happily, in English. He was as contented, as completely delighted, as if he had personally received a costly present and a handshake from the American President himself.

After these discussions my father and the hunchback left. ("At last," said the exhausted Seltzers, when the two were outside.) They walked through the evening streets, on which night soon fell; they walked up and down, back and forth. Neither of them hankered after his room on the fifth or sixth floor of the boarding house.

Father, who was not particularly tall, and who was, moreover, as weak as a boy, looked, by the side of the hunchback, like a giant. This insect of a man was tormented by an irrepressible passion for debate.

"Very good," he said. "You've said this and you've said that, Mister Fishman," he said. "Very good. A 'real American' it is, he-he! Very good, my dear man," he said. "But now, be kind enough to explain exactly what . . ."

Yossel Fishman returned no answer. He had no passion for debate. He happened to be thinking of Strody, and of us.

"Excuse me!" hissed the little man, insulted. "Do you want to talk with me, or don't you?"

"Yes," answered Yossel, "I don't want to talk with you. Let's go to a restaurant, instead. It's weeks since I've eaten potato pancakes."

On that evening the little man from Kishinev was in his element. He spoke and spoke and spoke, so that my father must have thought: "You'd have made quite a good traveling salesman for the ironmongery business of Meyer Blum of Lemberg."

Nevertheless, Yossel listened with greater interest than at the beginning to the philosophic effusions of the hunchback. The latter unfolded a "system," from which my father gathered that there were three kinds of men: men of the past, men of the future, and men of the present. He became quite excited about it.

They ate with much gusto the hot potato pancakes handed to them by a waitress, a Jewish girl from Cracow. And the hunchback spoke, and blew and bit into the almost sizzling pulp with an energy which one would never have credited to his tiny, ill-grown body.

"To live? What does 'to live' really mean? . . . Every man believes he lives, he-he! But how simple it is for a man to be mistaken. Take the men of the past. Here's the way they live: the stomach is still alive, true enough, but the head has long since been picked clean by the worms, he-he!" Pause, then in a lofty tone: "As compared with those, the men of the present have deluded themselves into the belief that they have found the key to happiness. Happiness! It makes me laugh. . . ." Pause, then in a fury: "How can those idiots be happy if they don't want to dream? . . ." Pause, then very cleverly: "And how do the men of the future live? A dog's life, Mister Fishman, something like yours. But they have beautiful dreams. . . ."

"But which is the best, Mister Kishinev?"

"That's a childish question," and the other hid himself under the round marble table-top, and there in the half-darkness blew contemptuously on the hot potato pancakes.

But then he emerged upward again to offer Yossel a piece of personal advice:

"A purely personal piece of advice, you understand," was the preamble. "For a man like you, who wants to bring his family over, there's really perhaps only one way: be farsighted and ambitious, don't let go! There are paupers in this country who are quite satisfied if they can fill their bellies for today, and have enough money in their pockets for a night's lodging. But perhaps that isn't really enough, Mister Fishman."

Yossel was thinking:

"That's not new to me. I thought he knew something special, but he knows no more than I do! He can only say it better. I've already been living here the way he tells me. . . ."

Was Yossel happy in this New York, with the Seltzers, the hunchback, his room on the fifth floor of the boarding house? Was he happy in America?

I do not believe he was.

Poor father, poor brother Jew, poor brother immigrant, poor uprooted one, you who, like so many Yossels, set out to seek happiness for yourself and for us because you could not find it in Strody, were you happy in America?

I do not believe you were.

For you were alone. . . .

Very often he felt lonely, without happiness, a man to be pitied. He began to be sorry for himself, for his utterly monotonous life, for his "American loneliness." The only really beautiful thing he had was his dream. In that dream there was no bare, wifeless room, no Yossel standing alone in the world;

in that dream a contented Leah smiled at her proud husband, everything beamed and flashed with the joy of life; in that dream there were children who developed their gifts. In a word: there was a happy "Fishman family."

When, in the evening, after work, he conjured up this life of the future, there lay before him, on the little table, the cardboard box with the many bills, and Yossel counted and counted again. He reckoned out again and again when he would finally have enough money saved to be able to buy the ship's tickets for us. He reveled in the pictures which swam up before him, the loveliest, brightest-hued pictures. He was no mean dreamer, our Mister Fishman. His head did not begin to buzz, nor did the images of the persons become confused. He saw everyone with beautiful clarity before him; quite shaken, he saw his Leah and heard his two children laugh. "It seems to me," he thought joyously, "they're going to like the taste of American happiness. So much the better, Mister Fishman! And now, to work! You are a very fine man! I am satisfied with you!"

He was widely liked in the factory. He did not in any way regret the fact that he had become a proletarian. It did not bother him that now his hand had to repeat the same motion nine hours a day, week-long, month-long, and that more than two years had now passed.

As a wage-worker he naturally became a member of the tailors' union. On the two occasions when there was a strike against the New York clothing manufacturers, and therefore against Rosenberg Brothers, Yossel went out on strike too. What can a man do under such circumstances? Early one morning he came as usual to the door of the workshop; there stood his fellow-workers, shouting: "Brothers, we have to strike!"

"Well, if everyone says we have to strike," said Yossel, "then that's all there's to it, and I'll strike along with the others."

To be sure, he never forgot that the strike set him back seventy-nine dollars.

Yossel had, then, become a manual worker, but he had not become a fighter for his class, a "class-conscious proletarian." His hopes were fixed on personal happiness. They were condensed into one word: Leah. Our Jewish cutter of New York's East Side was moved by one great, purely personal aim: Leah and his children.

The thing must be said, because it is the truth: my father preferred his membership in the Lemberg Lodge to his membership in the tailors' union. He was, after all, only a little, frustrated Jewish paterfamilias. He said to himself: "What can you do? I've got to be a member of the union, otherwise I lose my job."

That's the kind of man this Fishman was. A "disgrace to the international proletariat," say the comrades, and look at me reproachfully. But what can I do about it? He just didn't happen to be different.

And then at last.

At last he could send off the ship's tickets.

At last.

Soon Yossel's parents, Malka and Leib, would be all alone in Strody. Mister Fishman reflected: "Maybe I'll have them come over some day, too. They ought to sell the inn and live here with us, with their children." But for the time being he would write nothing about his plans.

At about that time they gave a play in the Lemberg Lodge, a Yiddish play, of course. Its theme was immigration. The hero of the piece—"A hero, like one of the Maccabees," thought Yossel, contentedly—thundered at the applauding public: "A Jew can't escape soon enough from those accursed European

countries! He can't range himself soon enough under the starry banner of freedom!"

Like everyone else Mister Fishman was profoundly touched when he discovered that the hero was likewise the author of this heart-stirring drama in four acts with prologue and epilogue. All the lodge members applauded this double genius. That same evening Yossel penned an enthusiastic letter to eastern Europe, and in it was the sentence beginning: "A Jew can't escape soon enough . . ."

But we did not come.

For a very simple, quite unliterary reason:

An epidemic of scarlet fever was raging at that time in Galicia, and when I rose from my bed after having been confined to it for nearly six months, my brother Hirsch fell sick, and the journey had to be put off once more.

And there Father was, waiting in America.

It was a rather extraordinary relationship that existed between me, the child, and my "American father." On my side there was actually none. How many thousands of Jewish children whose fathers led the way as immigrants have known the same emotions!

Squint-eyed Pinyeh, the letter-carrier, came often to the house and with tremendous to-do laid a letter on the table, though not without first having assured himself of a glass of brandy. I saw how my mother threw herself on the letter like a famished person and how she also cried sometimes. I still remember well the first days without a father. I had to draw something on a piece of paper; Hirsch had to do the same thing while somebody guided his hand, and everyone said to him: "Now you're sending regards to Father, Hirsch."

When, shortly after my father went away, there would be

some talk among us in Strody of a certain Yossel, Hirsch, the younger of us two, asked:

"Yossel? Who is that?"

Everyone scolded him, his mother and his grandparents.

"But that's your father!" they shouted at him, laughing, angry, frightened.

For an instant Hirsch remembered a man with a beard.

"Where's my father now?" he asked.

"In America," wept Malka.

"Where is that?"

"You'll soon find out," said Leib sadly, and stroked the little one's head. Malka, seeing this, turned quickly away, her conscience plagued her, but it was too late.

My brother did not retain for long the memory of the black beard. He asked every time what it was all about, this father and these letters. And every time they told him, irritably, angrily, frightened, laughing.

And the ship's tickets were there, but we could not set out. And when Hirsch too became well, Grandmother fell sick with gallstones. They wrote to my impatient father, who naturally agreed that we ought to remain till Grandmother was well again.

On some Sabbath afternoons Mother took the two of us out for a walk. It was a beautiful walk under the century-old trees of the local government building. We left the village behind, the air was mild, we sat down in a meadow; Mother pointed to the blue sky.

"Tomorrow your father will see the same sky," she said. "Just now it's day over here, and night where he is; tomorrow it will be day where he is and night over here."

We blinked reflectively upward, but did not quite understand.

Mother consoled us: "When you're bigger you'll understand me."

All three of us stared at the clouds, which looked like human heads, some of them even like gigantic, fearsome animals. But no child needed to be afraid; they were very, very high up. First the sky veiled itself in stormy gray, then the clouds dissolved again into the blue. The meadow grass stretched green at our feet. Hirsch wanted to pluck flowers.

"A Jew mustn't do that on the Sabbath," Mother taught him.

We became sleepy from much looking into the sky. The telegraph wires hummed.

The year 1914 began.

Many children who had been with us in the cheder never came again. They had died. Of scarlet fever. While the teacher, Mottke Reich, shouted at others, I, a six-year-old, sat with somewhat bigger boys on the end bench in the dark cheder room. We conversed in whispers on the wonder of life and the wonder of death. For me the world had suddenly become infinitely big and poor and sad. We spoke of our dead schoolmates. "Well, all right," said the ten-year-olds, who were already very wise, for they translated with ease the Five Books of Moses and certain other works. "All right, somebody dies, but is he really dead? What does dead mean? Now look out of the window. There's the sky, and the clouds. Well, don't you think that Ichkie and Shmul and David are there too?" And I sat there and was afraid, and I dreamed of them, and I imagined them in long nightshirts, with wings on their shoulders, with hair hanging down.

Until the teacher broke in, and scattered us with his much-feared cat-o'-seven-tails, and yelled at us in just the same way as his wife used to yell at him.

"May the Evil One snatch you away, you good-for-nothings, you rogues, you thieves, you . . . you . . . you . . . !"

I stayed long enough to witness the "new era" in Galicia. Arc-lamps, to the number of three, were put up in the market-place. For this festive event all Strody assembled before the local government building and, speechless with astonishment, stared at the glass spheres, which hissed, flamed violet, went out and flamed up again. All that night there was indescribable jubilation in the village, a wild shouting. All must have felt the onset of the new era.

Then the strolling comedians came again to Strody, to the Fishman house. I remember till this day what they played. It was a Yiddish farce, with a Yiddish Mama and two sons, one of whom was immeasurably stupid. The inn was transformed into a theater. Four barrels were arranged in front of a wall and covered with planks. The curtain, which never worked, was made by sewing together two tablecloths.

What a theater that was!

And what a grateful audience!

Never had there been so much laughter in the Fishman house as before, and of course after, this theatrical performance at the beginning of the year 1914.

We, the grandchildren of the innkeeper, naturally sat right in front, next to the barrels and planks which for these village Jews really represented the world.

We listened breathlessly as to a high revelation.

Before us, on the stage, sat the "good Yiddish Mama." She wailed: "Woe is me! How my heart bleeds that my younger son is such a stupid son!"

And she called him up to her from where he sat in the audience: "Come here, I'll give you a lesson how to be clever. If you go to a neighbor and you ask: 'Guess what I am,' and they don't know, then you make a clever face"—she made one, so that we fell off our seats laughing—"and you say: 'I'm hungry,' and then you're already clever. Get me?"

"Yes," the stupid one nodded. (Laughter, and calls of "Yes, you don't.")

"And what must you ask?"

"'Guess what I am.'" (Loud applause.)

"'I'm hungry,' Mama." (Redoubled applause.)

"Good. Now go to the neighbors."

Somebody pulled at the curtain but it refused to budge. "Bravo!" shouted the enthusiastic audience, and the "good Yiddish Mama" rewarded it with a two-line song.

Then the scene changed; that is to say, nothing whatsoever changed. My grandfather only had to hand up to the "neighbors" a dish containing herring and potatoes, for the neighbors "happened to be at their dinner." (The poor comedians, who always played the same piece, must have waited hungrily for this dinner from evening to evening, from village to village.) Thereupon the stupid son stepped onto the stage to the accompaniment of our catcalls.

The dialogue that ensued set the walls and the oil lamps rocking.

"Guess what I am," asked the stupid one. (Tremendous laughter in the audience. Shouts of "Quiet, please," from the stage.)

"You're an idiot, you're a jackass!" yelled the chewing neighbors in chorus. (Again screams of laughter, again shouts of "Quiet, please," from the stage.)

"No! You didn't guess!" said the stupid one joyously, and bleated like a goat. (Laughter, prolonged applause, shouts of "Quiet, please," from the stage.)

"Well, what are you?" came the chorus of the munching neighbors.

(No laughter now, a great silence, as before pronouncement of sentence by a judge.)

"I want to eat, ha! ha! ha!" said the stupid one.

That was the beginning of 1914.

That evening Mother came and sat down on our bed. She said, more to herself than to us:

"Everything in the world works out one way or another."

A sigh. Inward knowledge. Thus she found comfort for herself. We did not understand.

"Later," Mother comforted us.

"Why did Father go away from us?" I wanted to know.

"To make us happier," sighed Mother. We did not understand.

"Why did Father go to America?" we asked.

"Because there are no anti-Semites there," said Mother.

"What is that?"

"Later."

Mother was surely thinking of Kishinev. Her hand passed tremblingly over my head.

It must have been toward the end of June that my father received the letter which told him that our departure was set for August. Grandmother was well again. Then the war broke out.

In New York Yossel Fishman happened to be reading the Yiddish newspaper, when he felt a sudden stabbing pain in his heart.

"Austria-Hungary Declares War against Serbia!" So the

headlines on the front page proclaimed in heavy, shouting letters.

It seemed to Yossel that someone had struck him a blow between the eyes. All New York was speaking of "the war in Europe." And on the East Side, where the gray tenements stood, more than anywhere else was there a wild seething in the streets, the air-shafts, the houses, and in the hearts of men and women.

"What will Leah do now? I hope she sets out at once; I know it's only July, but I hope she'll set out just the same. . . ." Yossel shut his eyes, opened them again. "The sun shines black all over the world," he said to Leon Seltzer.

"The war won't last long," was Leon Seltzer's opinion.

"The war will last long, very long," the hunchback contradicted him.

Yossel and Leon Seltzer were furious. That Mister Know-It-All! He always has to say the opposite, that Jonah!

Sally Seltzer was very sorry for Yossel. "The poor fellow! He's been waiting so long. And what's going to happen now?"

And then, a couple of days later, Yossel read a new report: "Russians March on Austria! . . . Reported on the Stryj . . ." He felt a hard crust forming round his heart, then everything burst, the crust and the poor heart inside. He picked up the paper again and reread the lines, word for word. It was still there, the same word: "Stryj."

It was in the factory, during the lunch hour, that he read this piece of news. Something inside him began to call, softly at first, then stronger and stronger, to call, to eat into him, to demand:

"To Europe! To Strody! . . ."

His heart cried, his heart screamed, his heart wailed, his heart commanded:

"To Strody! . . ."

Yossel left everything where it was and rushed back to the house. Dumbly, swiftly, he began to pack. He still had the same trunk as he had brought with him years before. Outside, at the open door, the whole boarding house stood and murmured, excitedly:

"He's a soft kind of man, this Mister Fishman. He's got no nerves. He can't wait, you've got to know how to wait, in life. You've got to be able to stand still even if the floor under your feet is on fire. You listen to us! Your feet should be stronger than the floor."

"That's very good advice," Yossel thanked them, without looking up. "But not for my feet. It's easier to give good advice to others than to take it yourself."

The hunchback came running.

"You lunatic! You want to go? What for? You can't be of any help over there. Do you think they're going to listen to you when you arrive and say to them: 'Dear, good Europeans, I've come to get my family, please stop your war, at least until I've settled my private affairs, and after that, if you still want, you can carry on all you like as far as I'm concerned . . .?'"

"I'm going," gasped Yossel; he was trying to lock his trunk. Leon Seltzer and his wife Sally came hurrying.

"Stay here," they begged him, frightened.

"I'm going!"

"A Jew must never tempt God," Leon adjured him.

"I'm going!" said Yossel Fishman, and went forth.

That same night a Danish steamship put out to sea. Destination Europe. Good-by, Mister Fishman.

America sank away. There remained only the eternal sky, in which a moon was rising frostily.

Yossel stood all day long at the bow of the ship, as though he could wait no more. "This side of the ship will touch Europe first," his thoughts flew ahead. Gone is the dream of joyous American life, of children developing their gifts, of a Leah smiling happily. The dream is gone, Mister Fishman, you were a very nice man.

Water, horizon, excitement, terror, restlessness, ocean, a long staring into the distance.

Copenhagen.

This city lies in Europe. . . .

Earth Trembles

WHAT a day that was! The population stood in the market-place and waited: merchants, peasants, market-women, Mottke Reich the teacher, we pupils, horses, wagons. Although, as we soon discovered, the moment was not exactly suited to frivolous conversation, there was no lack of it. On that really historic day—I was then seven years old—I listened, with ears that tingled red, and for the first time in my life, to a flow of obscenity that I cannot repeat here because it simply cannot be written down. I experience once more those moments of agonizing illumination in which the life of husband and wife suddenly ceased to present itself to me as “the idyl of Father and Mother.” And just as I was beginning to be ashamed of the crystallizing thought which brought my parents and grandparents into association with the obscenity I had listened to, just at that moment Róman, the village constable, appeared on the scene, looking very aged. The impression he produced was precisely that of a retired circus horse that, on its way to the knacker, goes forth to encounter death with the airs and graces of a courtier. But how tremulous was that last walk! Under the burden of the years that were gone his legs had taken on an extra curve, the neck was longer and scrawnier, the face more green-

ish and indifferent. Thus he stood before us, cleared his throat a couple of times, and, when they had all stopped talking, began his statement in a voice that was positively rusty:

"Well, good people of Strody, it's broken out, it has, it's here, really and truly . . ."

It was thus that the world declared war on our village of Strody.

On that day my grandfather, like so many others, kept running to the market-place to pick up the latest news. They stood about in little groups. Some walked, debating, round the market-place, round and round and round, till evening twilight came, and the three arc-lamps in their glass spheres broke with a hissing sound into a violet flame and shed their thoroughly modern light on the excited, gesticulating hands. That evening we children remained awake in the inn till after midnight, and there was such a coming and going of people as we had never seen before. "War" was the terrific word which issued in innumerable repetitions from between mustache and beard, but for us children, who thought of the wars of long ago, the word had the metallic ring of shields and swords—we smelt romance in the air, which was soon to be filled with the smell of human blood and carbolic acid.

In the market-place Grandfather had encountered Dr. Nachum Spiegel, who very late that evening had come out of the wide doors of the Government building with his face flaming and eyes that wandered about in his head like the eyes of a hunted man. Eager for news, Leib had run up to the exhausted man and dragged him off to the inn.

Dr. Spiegel let himself be dragged along without offering any resistance. Resistance is, indeed, useless when war has been declared. Mobilization orders had been issued; the word was, Forward march! You had to sing: "God preserve and save our

Kaiser, God preserve and save our land!" Under these psychological conditions my grandfather did not find it difficult to handle the doctor.

I can still see myself sitting by the side of Mother, while opposite us sits the doctor, this "educated man," and everyone asks himself, and asks him, why his face has changed so, and why the lines on it are so much harder and deeper than at other times.

Yes, we know these intellectuals, these doctors, druggists, lawyers, banished by an accursed destiny to remote country places. We know them, and we know the vengeance that they take on mankind. . . . In little country places in every part of the world they play, in their pronouncements, the role of Almighty God in person. They exact bitter vengeance for the deadly boredom to which they have been delivered as in a life-sentence. And by giving a morose and spiteful twist to the thoughts and feelings of "his" particular village, each one of them feels he has turned the tables on his accursed destiny.

There are, of course, exceptions.

Monsieur Spiegel *fil's* of Paris maintains that his father was one of those exceptions. I cannot judge, for I was too young then to form a judgment. But I was not too young to listen to conversations and to understand their basic ideas. I had been the pupil of Mottke Reich the teacher for more than three years, and for a year I had been taking lessons in German and Polish from his energetic daughter, the plump Gittel.

Perhaps, then, Dr. Spiegel really was an exception. Be that as it may; here is what he told us on the day of the outbreak of war.

He had been to see the district captain, and as always before entering the gray building he had asked himself whether the man inside, this side-whiskers with the doddering chin, this dis-

trict captain, was still a living thing or only a well-preserved mummy with a phonograph inside. . . . "But what a shock I got! It's been a long time since I've seen him so young, so clever, so alive as I did an hour ago."

"*Vivat!* Long live Austria-Hungary!" These were the words with which the district captain greeted him. "*Vivat! Hoch!*" Then they spoke of the war that had been declared that day. In spite of the strenuous exertions the old man had had to put into the patriotic exclamations (can you remember the whistling of the now no longer living Aaron Amtmann?), he looked like anything but an old wreck. With coat flung wide open he sat there at his desk.

("Well, *one* miracle has been performed by the war," the doctor, shaking his head, assured the Fishmans.)

"I believe we Austrians couldn't do anything else," explained the hoary representative of the powers that be, in his condition of over-alertness. "Here the Serbs, these murderers, go and shoot our revered Heir Apparent in Sarajevo; whereupon we Austrians are forced to send them an ultimatum. My dear Doctor, I believe that our ultimatum was not intended in just that way. What happened was that the ultimatum was written in Vienna in the way such things are done when they have to be done. It was perhaps an ultimatum for the Viennese rather than for the Serbs"—and the old man, generally in a state of senility, shook his head cleverly. "And what did these wretched fools do? They rejected the ultimatum! *Rejected it!* Well, what was to be done? On every hand you hear the world shouting: Austria-Hungary must make war on Serbia. *Must!* War. Doctor! There's only one thing I ask myself. The Heir Apparent is dead, we all know that. But why, on account of a dead Heir Apparent, on account of a corpse, so to speak, even if it's a royal corpse, should one begin a war? But of course we in Strody don't direct the

high politics of the country. That's all decided in Vienna. And maybe they're right, maybe you can't let people get away with that sort of thing. And if that's the way they feel about it in Vienna, then off we go. In any case it will be a joke, against Serbia. Because we are much, much bigger than they. Yes, my dear Doctor, the Serbs must die and Serbs them right!"

"I was the witness of a great historic moment," Dr. Spiegel assured us, while all of us, children and grown-ups, hung breathlessly on his lips. "Once again a dying man rose to the height of those thoughts which only death inspires. But now this body will collapse all the more swiftly. Austria-Hungary is . . ." he whispered a word which I could not catch, for he whispered it only into Grandfather's ear.

But Grandfather did not understand either, for he asked again: "Are you speaking of the war?"

"We stand before the end."

"Thank God," said Grandfather with a sigh of relief. He was prepared to accept a hopeful statement even from an "infidel of a modern," even from one who shaved his face, went around bareheaded, and did not know how to say his prayers properly. "So it won't last long. Four weeks, perhaps?"

But the doctor's opinion was very definite:

"It will last a good deal longer, and it won't confine itself to Serbia. Russia will also want to fight, so will Germany, and perhaps France too. The whole world's been waiting for someone to give the signal. And Vienna's given it."

"Oh, go on with you!" My grandfather shook his head in disappointment. "I've always taken you for an educated man. What do you crack such jokes for?"

"Today they're celebrating in many countries, the militarists," Dr. Spiegel contended. "There's nothing as popular as a war."

"But there's a Parliament in Vienna," wailed Leib. "They're

all clever men, those deputies. They'll do something about it, those clever statesmen."

"That they will," the doctor assured him dutifully. "Now they'll start looking . . ."

"Looking for what?"

"The guilty party, dear Fishman," smiled the doctor. "They'll all squabble about it. The Czechs will squabble with the Poles, the Ruthenians with the Bosnians, the Bukovinians with the Viennese. Then, at the very end, they'll all be sure of one thing: 'The guilty party is—the Jew!' That's always the simplest solution, it unites them all."

Timidly Grandfather asked: "But the murderer of Sarajevo isn't a Jew, is he? God save us from such a disgrace!"

"That's all that was needed!" growled Spiegel. "But who knows how things turn out! Somebody has to be beaten up for it."

"And suppose we lose the war?" the question went up wildly from all of us.

The doctor said: "You're all Jews, and still you ask such a stupid question. Has a war ever been won? Nobody wins wars. What good did Titus's victory over the Jews do him? Did it perhaps prevent him from dying? It's all nonsense, it's all useless." Here he uttered a self-satisfied laugh, and probably thought that he had given utterance to a worthwhile idea, this of the futility of victory.

"Well, if you can still laugh about it!" said Grandfather, quite relieved.

Dr. Spiegel shrugged his shoulders. It suddenly occurred to him that in a few years this country would perhaps no longer be Austrian. Perhaps the war would bring realization to the century-old struggle and faith of the Polish nation. Warsaw would no longer be subject to the rule of the Tsars, nor Galicia

to that of Franz Josef. A mighty sound of hymns, hymns of death and hymns of birth, would be sent pealing by the war across these monarchies of today. "Our Poland is not dead yet . . ." rang in Dr. Spiegel's ears. Would Austro-Hungarian absolutism crack up in this war? Would Poland, proud and ancient Poland, experience a rebirth . . . ?

"But what am I to do?" asked my mother in utter despair. "Our journey to America . . ."

"Set out at once," said the doctor, without too much reflection.

"Oh, she can wait till the war is over," proposed my grandmother, wearily. Her sickness had taken it out of her.

"That's what I say, too," declared Leib, firmly.

Then came something I will not forget as long as I live. Mother said, hesitantly:

"And, besides, we haven't done the washing yet . . ."

All this took place in the inn and in the crowded little room of the Fishmans. But outside, under the chestnut trees, the three arc-lamps still flared. So loud were the disputes on that midnight market-place that the sound of them penetrated into our room: voices of men, children, women, Yiddish, Polish, Ruthenian curses.

"War . . ."

Time seemed to stand still.

"War . . ."

Everyone trembled at that word, which had a clashing, stabbing sound. In the border towns of Europe the word that day took on an especially threatening tone.

And Strody lay close to the Russian border.

"War . . ."

The shutters of the window were thrust aside. Was not that someone's hand tapping on the panes? . . .

"Yossel . . ." thought Mother.

We children, brought up in the history of the Jewish people, thought of little David with his sling, we thought of Goliath, the helpless giant.

And so it was war, but there was nothing that we, the inhabitants of Strody, could do about it.

The doctor had been only too right.

Very soon Russia joined in.

Blow after blow followed.

Suddenly we were not going to the cheder any more. It was quite true that nobody gave us permission to absent ourselves from our lessons, but somehow or other we children, too, came under the influence of that atmosphere of released impulses, of the ending of ordered rule and of the beginning of unrestraint. All at once the cheder of Mottke Reich became so depopulated that the investigating commissions of the Royal and Imperial Government would surely have found the air in it unobjectionably hygienic even without the help of a couple of kronen. But the Royal and Imperial Government happened to be occupied with other worries. Free and uncontrolled, we ran around all day long in the village of Strody. Most of the time we hung about, a troop of twenty boys of about my age, in the neighborhood of the little railroad station. Uninterruptedly, for three days and three nights, the heavy-laden military trains rolled eastward on the shining rails, trains without end, rattling, bumping. It seemed to us that the earth was cracking open.

In the cattle-cars stood singing soldiers, with flowers in their hands, their caps, the barrels of their rifles. Batteries, cannon, howitzers, hidden under tent covers, rolled massively along in freight trains which only a little while before had been carrying wood, metal, stone, or machines. Horses neighed out of the straw-filled cars. Only yesterday they were ordinary, simple

peacetime horses, now they were going to the front as war horses.

In the nights lines of trucks went rattling through the streets of Strody. Military transports, ammunition wagons, mobilization materials, gray tent carts with the Red Cross on them.

Officers were quartered with the Fishmans. Whenever we children came home we found Mother standing at the ironing-board. She was ironing our linen which, washed at last, was to be taken along to America. Now and again an officer came in and asked Mother to be kind enough to take the creases out of his military coat. She did it, but she did it sighing. She did not want to lose any time, poor thing. She still hoped.

Suddenly—the town had for some days taken on the aspect of a military encampment—suddenly we became aware, in the middle of the bright summer day, of a distant sound of thunder.

No need to ask long what that was. Already ambulance wagons were coming back, laden with the wounded. Already east Galicia resembled a land visited by earthquake. Columns of smoke went up into the sky, and soldiers with bandaged heads, their arms in slings, or limping on crutches, flooded the district with the poisonous, biting smell of carbolic acid. The Austro-Hungarian troops began their retreat. They pulled along with them the terrified civilian population. The distant thunder drew nearer and nearer. We were advised to evacuate the village.

There were no more trains for civilians. Grandfather tried to get a larger ladder-wagon somewhere, and after long effort finally succeeded. Very swiftly we threw a few boxes into the wagon, but had to throw them out again, for there would have been no room left for the passengers.

His face ashen pale, my grandfather said:

"Leave everything here. Only the people . . . In a few days we'll be back."

"We've got to hide the most important things, at least," my weary grandmother advised. "From the Cossacks."

Mother stammered: "And the wash for America?"

"Bring everything down to me in the cellar!" shouted Grandfather, impatiently.

Carrying an oil lamp, we sought out a dark corner. Then we covered everything with potatoes, cabbages, straw, and barrels. In front of the cellar door where the cache was made, we erected a barricade of furniture, boxes, sacks of grain. Then we mounted again into the house, drew the wooden cellar-steps after us into the yard, chopped it up with axes, and left the pieces lying there.

Then we flung ourselves into the wagon. Mother held a sack on her knees; it contained her two Sabbath silver candlesticks and a sock, a single left sock of Father's. We children sat on two cushions sewn together. The sun blazed pitilessly.

The shirts stuck to the exposed backs of the refugees.

Dust whirled in the streets of Strody.

The horses shook themselves and neighed plaintively against the heavy burden that they had to pull.

Soldiers marched in endless columns.

Fresh troops marched firmly in closed ranks toward the front, from west to east.

Troops with all the fight gone out of them marched back in loose, shattered columns, from east to west.

Our wagon came to a halt, stuck fast between these lines of troops. We were still in Strody. In a whole hour we had not moved five hundred yards from the Fishman house.

The stink of carbolic acid became more and more asphyxiating.

The dull detonations of artillery drew closer and closer.

We could hardly believe it when at last the wheels of our wagon began to turn. The air wailed like a thing gone mad as we left Strody.

We were not going of our own free will. We were not fleeing on our own initiative out of "uncivilized eastern Europe" into the "civilized west-European" countries. For me, the seven-year-old, the "prison-house of the homeland" had truly been no prison-house. Nothing drew me toward the wide freedom of the world; it was the war that thrust us out of Strody, not like a human being, not like a child—like soulless bundles of war material. I had not the slightest idea what that thing was: flight, migration. Those to whom I fled taught it to me very quickly. I learned, sooner and more swiftly than I would otherwise have learned, to know the baseness of a world which fastens a sign to the tight seat of its trousers: "We rooted ones are mightily proud of our rootedness." And another sign is fastened near it: "Beat it, uprooted one, we despise you."

And thus I became one of the uprooted, the despised, the harassed.

But let's take our seats again in the Fishman wagon. None of the grown-ups dared to imagine that the war would last a long time. No one dared to entertain the idea that this flight before the Russians, this sudden departure from Strody, might be a definitive departure into the unknown. And yet a paralyzing shudder passed from one frightened person to the other.

"Is America coming soon?" asked my brother Hirsch.

"Be quiet," my mother panted.

Then she began to weep. Till that moment she had remained silent. Marching soldiers sang, appropriately enough: "*Muss i'*

denn, muss i' denn, zu-um Städtele hinaus, Städtele hinaus, u-und du mein Schatz bleibst hier . . . ? Must I go, must I go, from the village far away, while you, my love, stay here . . . ?” No one’s love stayed behind in Strody, for there Strody suddenly was, in the space of one hour, in the heart of the Austro-Hungarian war area.

Hirsch, who for weeks had been getting ready for the journey to America, really believed we were on the way to the ship.

“When do we get to America, Mama?”

“Quiet!” shouted old Leib, his voice rising to a yell. For the first time we children were treated roughly by him. The grown-ups did not even notice it; we began to cry.

The wide roads which had been laid here with wise foresight many years before, for military reasons, now proved to be not wide enough. They were planned with the thought of soldiers in mind, but not of refugees. Every other instant our wagon had to come to a halt. The road was jammed. Beyond the reach of the eye stretched the long column of the ladder-wagons of the fleeing civilians.

The soldiers marched in mysterious haste, taking up one-half of the road. Flying swarms of insects confirmed the heavy closeness of the disintegrating summer day.

Darkness descended swiftly; it was starless, impenetrable. We saw nothing more of the soldiers, only the ear caught the sound of marching feet. The Fishmans, shaken along in their wagon, heard the crisp, hard commands of the officers and sergeants. In this first night of our flight the sky seemed to be terrifyingly far off.

Countless wagon-wheels turned reluctantly in the oppressive darkness. The planks that made up the floor of the ladder-wagon groaned and creaked. The sandy roadbed gave out a crunching sound under the unaccustomed burden. In the trees, which we

guessed at rather than saw, an imprisoned wind whispered furiously.

We moved forward very slowly. Morning was already glimmering and still we had not reached any destination. Still we crawled forward slowly along the straight line of the road. Here and there we saw, with eyes that had kept vigil through the night, groups of soldiers to right and left of the road, sitting on ammunition cases. Near the weary soldiers their rifles were stacked in pyramids.

The sun of the new day mounted higher and higher. Many refugees were on foot, for only a few had been able to obtain wagons. Often they fled straight across the fields. They ran, sped, gasped away from the east, which was wrapped in flames. They shambled along helplessly, their arms dangling.

We were being thrust back ever closer against the Carpathian mountains, for the Russians were penetrating deeper and deeper into the country. Men and women had become wordless and white. The grandparents sat facing each other, never exchanging a word, they sat there and looked down between the planks at the earth, which changed from day to day. The drops of sweat no longer left Grandfather's yellowish forehead. His Adam's apple stuck out in a point from his lean neck. Even Grandmother's face consisted now of nothing but folds of hopelessness, it was pale from the sleepless nights, chalky, pulpy. Exhausted, they sought in vain for parallels—for those impressive parallels which always bring hope to the Jew. Only one parallel persisted in old Leib's mind, that story of the Russo-Japanese War and "the guilt of the Jews" for the defeat of the Russians, as they explained it after the disaster. But this parallel afforded no consoling hope.

Wherever we Fishmans arrived, people were packing up.

Many were ready to set out. A blind excitement raged in all the villages through which we passed. In every corner sat refugees, on sacks, chairs, cushions, holding a piece of bread and sometimes a red Polish sausage. One terrified question recurred in their eyes:

"When will the Russians get here?"

The wagon went rattling along the Galician roads, still carrying us refugees from Strody. A strong odor came from the fields, in the woods the summer played with the shadows of the trees, the sky was deep blue, it was cloudless. Suddenly two points appeared on the horizon. At first each point was as tiny as a flea, a very small flea. But they drew nearer and nearer, became bigger and bigger.

The wagons came to a halt on the slowly mounting road, which, as we were told, should bring us straight into the Carpathians. As if at a word of command all heads bent back on their necks and stared upwards. The drivers pointed their whips at the sky. It looked as if these whips were moved by a common impulse to bring the points down.

For the first time in our lives we inhabitants of Strody beheld aeroplanes. It needed a war to make us acquainted with this great technical achievement of the twentieth century. They were two Russian machines. The soldiers who were standing by our wagon, and staring with us into the sky, told us so.

"The Russian machines have peacock eyes," said one of them.

"The German machines have a black cross," suggested another.

"For my part they can have a hundred crosses," growled Grandfather. "But just between ourselves, Mister Soldier, how much longer is this war really going to last?"

"Well, old man, till the first of January at the most."

The grown-ups among the Fishmans were terrified. Now they almost believed it themselves.

Mother was thinking of America, she was thinking frantically: "Yossel . . ." She wanted to think only of this name, and of nothing more. Only to think of nothing more just now . . .

"We haven't taken any winter things along for the children," observed Grandmother, to her terror.

"There's a lot of things we haven't taken along," Leib was thinking dumbly, and he looked down grimly at himself and at the other Fishmans.

At a bend in the road three spies hung from an ancient tree, two men and a woman. One of the men was in clerical garb. Screaming, Mother pressed us to her, but it was too late, for we had already seen the ghastly, withered, blue-red deathmasks. Our grandparents looked away, they both wept.

The peasant driving our cart spat out, he spat out mightily at the dangling "traitors," so that all could see him.

All the peasants on the road spat openly, in the same way.

Then our peasant crossed himself furtively.

All the peasants did the same.

We had to hurry on, for they were blowing up the bridges behind us. The sappers drove us wretched civilians to even greater haste. They had no time, they already held lighted fuses in their hands.

In a little town not far from the Carpathians the warring world gave us our first respite. We had acquaintances there, they treated us like sick people, they spoke to us gently, they gave us the best food, the best beds. And at the same time our hosts began to pack their belongings.

"The Russians are still advancing," they confided to each other.

Names like Lemberg, Komarov, sounded like the thunder of cannon.

The Austrian troops, we were told, had taken a stand between the rivers Stryj and Magierov. They had been defeated in the battle for Lemberg. Would they now be able to stand up against the wild cavalry regiments, the Cossacks? Against this Russian colossus, this wild bear?

The eastern sky veiled itself in reddish light.

One corner of the sky remained blue, but not for very long. The onrushing flood of gray clouds extinguished it.

The Telegram

WHAT happened to Yossel Fishman in the meantime was horrible, indescribably horrible.

Here is the year 1914, and the war.

Here is the ship, which has just arrived from America.

And here is Yossel, who has flung from the ship and into the strange town just at the hour when crowds of people are issuing from the factories and workshops, which are now closing their doors.

There he is, running before us. We can see only his back, with the two strengthless arms hanging down like the blades of a pocket-knife with broken springs.

There's a post office, at last.

Yossel disappears through a door.

We follow.

Now he stands in front of a window.

Behind the window sits a round-faced official who takes the slip from the excited man.

The text of the telegram is in German, with a number of mistakes, to be sure, but Roundface understands German and therefore the telegram too.

"I smell something in these words," went suddenly through

his head, in Danish. "The sender of this telegram may be a spy. The papers are full, every day, of stories about these international adventurers. Come to think of it, I'd like to see what one of these spies looks like. . . ."

So very carefully, discreetly, like a private detective, the official peers over the top of the telegram blank. Aha! There the spy stands, at a distance of two feet. Now he looks at him quite sharply. He feels him from head to foot with his eyes, which have involuntarily become two narrow slits. Every millimeter of face, every protuberance and depression in the skin—he makes a thorough scrutiny of the man. But he comes to the conclusion that the man really doesn't look like a spy. Which makes him doubly suspicious.

"If he were to look like a spy," so he analyzes, as he sits perspiring behind his uninteresting window, and there flash through his mind all the detective novels he has read with much understanding in his free time, "if he were to look like a spy, he surely wouldn't be one. But with that silly face of his. With that little goatee. With that pale, almost yellowish forehead. With those sunken cheeks, that skew pince-nez . . . !"

He no longer has any doubts. And why should he have any? All the suspicious circumstances are there:

"A queer telegram, a queer text with a secret word in it. Addressed to the center of the eastern front. Where fierce battles are raging between Russians and Austrians. Every day the papers are full of it."

"Have no moireh from the war am in Europe Yossel."

Five times this Copenhagen official reads through the telegram, and then suddenly he becomes aware how ridiculous his suspicion is, how ridiculous is this whole war psychosis to which he, a Dane, had almost fallen a victim without the slightest reason. "Silly! What's the whole business got to do with me any-

way?" he thinks, with suddenly liberated mind, and really, it makes him feel much better than he did only a moment ago. "Silly! My country's neutral, why shouldn't I be the same? Come to think of it, he looks more like a worried father of a family. Maybe the poor man has relatives down there, in that witch's caldron."

"What does *moireh* mean?" he asks in German. He asks it in a friendly way, almost co-operatively.

Yossel Fishman does not know. He does not speak German well enough to be able to translate. Besides, he had really believed that "*moireh*" was also a German word.

"In Yiddish it's called *moireh* and in English they say *fear*," he explains helplessly. Then an idea comes to him. "You see, *moireh* is what I've got," he tells the official, "it's exactly what I've got."

The other does not understand.

"I'm frightened, because my wife, my children, and my parents are over there, where they're making war," Yossel tries to make it all clear. "And because I'm frightened I've got *moireh*. . . ."

"Oh, *fear*!" exclaims the official delightedly, and substitutes the word in the telegram.

"All right, for my part, *fear*," says Yossel, eagerly. All he knows is that he is full of "*moireh*." And only one thing matters to him, namely, to let his family in Strody know that he has arrived in Europe.

The Danish official, who knows his little Denmark but does not know the other, big countries, offers him a consolation to take along with him on the road.

"My friend," he says cheerfully, "in four weeks the war will be over. Then you won't need to have *moireh* any more."

Before Yossel goes, the official shakes hands with him across

the window and offers him a little package. In the package there is a ham sandwich.

Frightened, Yossel refuses.

"It's something good," the official urges, good-naturedly. "Bread and butter and ham, take it, really. It was for my afternoon tea, but I wasn't hungry."

He does not know that Yossel Fishman does not eat ham. He does not know that God has forbidden Yossel to partake of ham. He does not know that this Yossel leaves the little package in the train.

Dear friend in Copenhagen, it is good not to know everything.

In any case, I like you.

And I thank you, late in the day though it is.

Yossel Fishman forgot to do it.

This, more or less, is what must have happened:

The telegram was relayed eastward, it passed through Germany.

The German officials of the "Military Service of the Interior" lifted up their noses when they read the text the first time. When they read it the second time, they felt as if a hand grenade had exploded at their feet. They had never been at the front, these gentlemen of the "Military Service of the Interior."

To make sure of their procedure, they read the telegram to the "Political Police." The latter passed it on at once to the "Supreme War Council" and to the "Foreign Office." These two central bodies, with their offices in Berlin, relayed the telegram without delay to their counter-espionage service for immediate and careful action. A hundred officials read. A hundred officials sought the key to the code. A hundred officials racked their official brains for the meaning of the words;

"Have no fear from the war am in Europe Yossel."

They really put every effort into it, but they could not solve the mystery. They therefore wired the telegram to the proper Federal officials of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

A text like this fell within the competence of seven officials of the Royal and Imperial Government. All seven sniffed at it with the intensity of bloodhounds.

But Vienna, not less than Berlin before it, exhausted itself in vain.

"Pity we can't show those Berliners what we're capable of," said Councilor Sekira.

Baffled, his subordinate suggested that the telegram should simply be forwarded to its destination in Strody, and then "something" would certainly be discovered.

Shuddering, he looked up at the tremendous theater of the war, which hung in his office in the form of a huge, multi-colored map, and observed, not without satisfaction, that the Russians ("Every shot must get one Russky!") had evacuated that important place the day before, and had been beaten back a kilometer by the valiant Austro-Hungarian troops. And so, as he suggested hopefully to his superior, it would be easy to lay hands on the addressee, Leah Fishman ("We must file a report without delay, Councilor!").

At the same time a telegram went off from Vienna to Berlin, with instructions to have the Danish frontier closely watched.

Armed with the mysterious text, a high official of Section K, which was the "Central Control for Counter-Espionage," set out meanwhile for the liberated townlet of Strody on the river Stryj. But unfortunately, as this high official established for himself, the Fishman house, which must definitely have been the residence of the said Leah Fishman, was empty and

abandoned. All the houses in Strody were empty, some of them destroyed. Walls had fallen in, chimneys had been shorn away, the ruins still smoked, and from the distance came a sound of thunder.

The official of Section K found the district anything but safe. He returned hastily to make his report. In Vienna there was really considerable dissatisfaction with the whole business.

"Why did not the addressee remain in Strody?" asked the subordinate in Vienna penetratingly. He sighed, unable to conceal his disappointment.

But Councilor Sekira understood why. "This woman definitely knows her business. But, old man, we'll get this foxy female just the same. There are plenty of trees in our kingdom. There's one ready for her, too!"

This "foxy female," my mother, knew nothing of all this. At the moment in question she was busily engaged with a fine comb, combing a few lice out of the fresh-washed heads of her two children. Such was the heroic struggle which she was conducting in those days. The tin bathtub with the dirty water stood near her as the "corpus delicti."

"There are plenty of trees . . . there's one ready for her, too," was the official and threatening assurance of Councilor-in-Charge Sekira, who in private life was a thoroughly kindly man.

We shall see.

And so civilization, and order, and culture, and law, and whatever else you want to call it, took their course.

The Danish train that carried my father arrived at the German frontier station.

At the barrier stood four improbable gentlemen, who looked like traveling salesmen for a wine firm.

But they were not traveling salesmen, they were four counter-espionage experts who had come specially from Berlin to receive Yossel Fishman.

Yossel showed his papers.

One after another the four experts examined the papers, the man, and then each other. Then they nodded at each other: "Oho, this is the man with the telegram."

The squattiest of the four began to smile. It was a smile that looked like a plateful of ice-cream in the July sun.

Very sweetly he said:

"Please step to one side, if you please."

Yossel did as he was told and waited. He did not know what a dangerous situation he had run into. He took it that on this day all people whose names began with F were being examined. He had been examined on his arrival in America, too. And so he waited, in no way discouraged and not at all frightened.

He observed without special interest that all the travelers had to show their papers, and he saw likewise that they all had to pass through the barrier. Only he, of all people, remained standing there, surrounded by the four men. No one else had been told to stand to one side. "I must be the only one today whose name begins with F," thought Yossel Fishman.

When the station was finally empty, the four serious gentlemen made an even closer circle round the solitary Yossel and propelled him, gently but energetically, into the bare waiting-room. Yossel looked exactly the same as he had done in Copenhagen. But the officials were different. They were neither postal officials nor Copenhagenites.

On the table lay a sheet of paper. Near the paper lay, brown

and heartless, a riding-whip; it dangled brutally over the edge of the table. The lower end had formed into a loop capable of choking Yossel to death. It swung about like a gallows noose as the four serious gentlemen ranged themselves about the table.

"Where do you come from?"

"America."

"What were you doing there?"

Yossel told them, more in Yiddish than in German, that he had been a cutter with the big firm of Rosenberg Brothers on New York's East Side.

"What are you doing in Europe?"

Yossel explained, as well as he could. He had read that the Russians had crossed the frontier. "And I feared for the lives of my dear ones," he said imploringly and apologetically in his broken German. He actually said "I feared," not "I had *moireh*."

One of the gentlemen wrote his statement down, word for word.

"And where do you want to go now?" they inquired in detail.

"To Strody on the Stryj," said Yossel.

They told him to take his clothes off.

Yossel assured them that he was hiding nothing.

"Make it snappy!" snarled one of the men. Thereupon Yossel undressed silently.

First his coat, his vest, his shoes.

Then trousers, underpants, shirt, undershirt.

At another snarl he quickly pulled his socks off.

"Now I am naked, as commanded," thought Yossel, and shivered with cold.

The four experts set to work.

One of them examined the shoes. He found nothing.

The second inspected the suit, the underwear, the hat, and the walls of the trunk. Found nothing.

The third one told the submissive Yossel to open his mouth, and looked into it; he told him to stand with legs wide apart and pulled his buttocks asunder ("Ow!" shrieked Yossel, terrified). But this thorough inspection yielded nothing, either.

The fourth expert sat at the table and meditated.

This gentleman was, in his free time, a contributor to a local Berlin paper, *With God for Kaiser and Fatherland*, for which he wrote powerful articles on "Spy and Criminal Cases of the Week." On top of this he composed, from time to time, war poems of which he was particularly proud on patriotic and artistic grounds.

"Espionage"—so he meditated now, long and intently—"is the inexhaustible story of the application of every possible method for the destruction of the enemy."

"An enumeration of all the devices that have been used for the transmission of secret information in the service of espionage or of counter-espionage, with intent to bluff or deceive, would fill many volumes.

"The ingenuity of the male no less than of the female spy knows no bounds; they are beyond the imaginative reach of the readers of our paper.

"I can report from reliable sources that only recently, on the Danish-German frontier, a spy who had long evaded our net attempted to deceive our counter-espionage service in the guise of a Jewish beggar.

"But our efforts to lay him by the heels finally succeeded. He is now face to face with his just retribution."

That's how simple this profession is.

They sat in a locked compartment of the regular express that rushed across the north German plain. Yossel wore handcuffs. He sat in the midst of these four stiff civilians, who did not utter a single word; they did not even play cards.

His lips gone chalky, his teeth chattering, Yossel said:

"You *takke* (really) made a mistake. Please believe me. You've let the real criminal escape. But you've arrested me, the innocent man."

When he finally managed to get these difficult words out, he felt a great pity rising in himself. Yossel's way was slow and heavy; he hesitated long before he took up an attitude toward life, his thoughts moved slowly, he was much too serious to keep pace with this essentially unserious world. We see this best at this particular moment, when he is up to his neck in trouble. What is it that rises in him, in the Jew Yossel? Pity for the four gentlemen who have made such a mistake.

"You've arrested me, the innocent man . . ."

"Maybe we have, maybe we haven't," said the squattiest of the four, expressionlessly.

The car hammered its monotonous song on the riveted rails. In Yossel's ears the wheels of the train sang the refrain of a song that Jews in every part of the world were singing at the turn of the century. They knew that "comforting" song of the French captain, Dreyfus, everywhere, in Kiev and Nizhni-Novgorod, in San Francisco and in Strody:

"Do you know why you suffer, Dreyfus?

Because you are a Jew, Dreyfus."

These words came into his mind, they really gave him courage, and he began to pour out his whole heart.

"That's the way things are with me, Yossel Fishman," he said.

"That's why I went to America and worked hard there.

"My wife and children have had their ship's tickets for a long time, but they couldn't come to America for these and these reasons."

And so he unrolled his whole life before his guards. He was not very skillful in the use of German, so he was forced to illustrate the story with his hands. Handcuffs dangled from his wrists.

"Maybe it's so, maybe it isn't," said the squattiest of the four, indifferently. He was thinking to himself: "Go on with your sheeny-talk. Before long you'll have no sheeny-talk left in you, Ikey-Moe."

When they got to Berlin, Yossel was shoved into a high, iron-barred wagon. After five minutes the horses came to a halt. They proceeded at once from the yard to the examination.

He stood before a slender officer who held Yossel's papers in his hand, and measured the prisoner sharply through half-closed but stern eyes.

Yossel was almost dead with fright.

"Why have you altered your appearance?" he was asked suddenly and brutally.

"How do you mean, altered it, Mister Officer?"

"Listen, man! Let's have no disguises!" Every word was a dull drum-beat. Suddenly the officer yelled out, so that Yossel reeled back: "That won't help you any! You understand?"

Yossel choked, Yossel nodded, Yossel thought of a trick. "Why does he yell like that, and what can I do about it? I can't do much. I'll just nod. I'll nod to everything. It can't do any harm to nod."

"On your picture you have a square beard, and now your beard is much shorter, and pointed. Why is that, you?"

Astonishment came into Yossel's face. He was astonished, too; he had understood! But had he really understood? But whichever way it was, he entered on a long explanation:

"Mechel Pollatchek told me in New York . . . told me that nowadays a pointed beard is more sensible. A young Jewish man of today no longer wears a big beard like the old *tzadikim* of Cholm . . . that's what Mechel Pollatchek told me in New York . . ."

"Are you trying to make a fool of me?" yelled the officer.

"What do you mean, make a fool of you?" Yossel asked, frightened, and shook his head. He did not understand the phrase "to make a fool of someone." He did not have the remotest idea why they were keeping him here. "But anyhow I can see you're against me, Mister Officer," he affirmed sadly and audibly.

The officer felt his mouth go dry. But he mastered himself.

"And what's the meaning of this telegram?" he flung at the prisoner.

Yossel suddenly saw his telegram: "Have no fear from the war am in Europe Yossel."

"Why isn't it in Strody?" he asked, utterly flabbergasted.

He told the whole story all over again, in all its details; everything was put down in the report, he appended his name at the end. The wet pen in his trembling hand, tears in his stammering voice, he repeated again and again:

"What do you want of me, Mister Officer? I simply had to leave New York when I read the newspapers. Supposing you had a wife and two children . . . And parents, too, parents like mine; you'd have gone, too. What do you want of me, Mister Officer? . . ."

He wailed in a dreadful German, but quite intelligibly.

"Stop talking piffle," said the officer, this time without yelling, in fact, almost hesitantly, and had the frantic prisoner led out.

What queer trades there are in the world, and what queer people. I just happened to remember Shmul Fishel, the coffin-maker of Strody, who used to stop all the grown-ups and children on the street, measure them from head to foot, and say aloud: "Five foot eleven," "Four foot ten."

It was his curious habit—and what could you do about it?—to measure his fellow-villagers of Strody for their coffins while they were still alive. All our lengths were neatly entered into his notebook.

But what a harmless creature a Shmul Fishel is in comparison with those gentlemen whose profession it is to unmask spies.

God help the poor, unknown person who arouses their suspicions! And their suspicions fall on *every* unknown person! God help that poor person. God have mercy when this race of men, which has transformed a persecution complex into a profession, smells a victim.

And there was Yossel Fishman, the suspected spy, in a cell in one of Berlin's prisons, completely occupied with the task of not going mad with fear. He had already had some experience with officialdom, in Strody and in America, and this experience, incomplete as it was, had led him to the belief that its ranks are seldom recruited from the most intelligent but very often from the most comfortable walks of life. Frantically he asked himself and his God what would become of him now. He had been examined by the officer who looked like a boy, who had yelled at him as one yells at a criminal—and this officer now had his destiny in his hands. What would his decision be? "How can such a fine,

well-kept officer think himself into my life? Does he know the world in which I grew up, and the world I come from? In fact, did he understand me at all, with my 'German'? Well, how can he say I'm guilty? And why, why?"

But it was not Yossel alone who was tormented by his thoughts. The officer, too, the responsible officer who had examined him, now sat at his table, the report open before him, his head supported by his soft hands—sat and brooded and analyzed and analyzed and brooded. And finally he came to a decision from which I, the son of the "spy," cannot withhold my respectful acknowledgment. We must bear in mind that the war was raging not only on the fields of battle but in the brains of men. At such a time, few men think reasonably, fewer act reasonably.

This officer, who could be brutal, to be sure, but who could also be sentimental, had the simple impression that this Jew, this Yossel Fishman, had told him the truth. For all that, war is war, caution is therefore the first law. He made a circumstantial report to his superior officers. These gentlemen were naturally disappointed. They had taken it for granted that they had made a first-class catch. To anticipate such things was their job, that was what they were paid for. Apart from this ("Extraordinary, where these newspapers get their information from so quickly!") a local Berlin paper, *With God for Kaiser and Fatherland*, had come out with some astonishing details concerning this spy case—details which had been copied by other papers. All in all, a disconcerting incident.

What was to be done?

After a three-hour conference they decided to release the suspect, but to continue as it were to suspect him, since they weren't quite sure. A very skillful operative was instructed to shadow him as far as the frontier.

At the frontier there awaited him "Private Shoelace." This was the name given in all friendliness, but not without a touch of derision, by the Germans to the Austrians, during the war, because the latter did not wear high boots, like the Germans, but laced shoes with puttees.

My father did not keep them waiting long.

Flight

SUDDENLY the most solemn of all Jewish holy days came in the little Carpathian town where we refugees of Strody were taking our first longer respite. Actually the townlet should already have been evacuated, for the Russians had made another successful advance. They had recaptured the terrain that they had lost, and had added to it. Now they were riding and marching at top speed toward the west, where the Austrians had taken up their position in trenches, on the hills, and in the ravines.

Officially the townlet was considered evacuated since the day before, but on their holy day the Jews would not travel in carts.

"God will not abandon us, if we pray," said the old people. "You've got to know how to suffer, as a Jew. Come, it is time to begin the great prayers."

An hour before the onset of that holy day the last soldiers, whose task it was to blow up the bridge in order to cut off and delay the Russian advance, saw the Jews coming into the shadows of the little streets. They marked how these fanatically devout graybeards hastened with their death-pale families toward the house of prayer which awaited them.

Inside, no one was able to sit down, neither the old people,

nor the women, nor the strangers, the refugees, since there was no room for benches.

We stood pressed close against our mother, who was praying in the women's gallery. From the outside world came the shattering sound of cannon, and not of trumpets as on the Day of Judgment. And on the bridge the sappers made the first preparations for the explosion.

The air in the house of prayer was asphyxiatingly thick with the smell of the flickering memorial candles, the broad prayer-shawls, the yellowing prayerbooks, centuries old.

Bodies swayed wildly to right and left, while the feet of the suplicants, like the feet of soldiers, stood rooted to the wooden floor. The men had taken their shoes off, they stood before God in their stockinged feet, for they had much to pray for, and on such a day one must draw near in awe. They beat their bosoms frenziedly, and contritely acknowledged their sins, great and small. They wore, on top of their daily clothes, white cerements sewn with silver thread. On many faces was written an angry fear, mingled strangely with faith, reverence, yes, even exaltation.

The ecstasy grew from hour to hour. The house was swallowed up in the cry of prayer, and only the eastern wall of the synagogue, this wall which was now the boundary between war and peace, remained, and became the Wailing Wall of these tormented men and women.

Venerable graybeards had been standing at this wall since the earliest morning hour. Their eyes, like the eyes of men possessed, were turned penetratingly inward, in search of sins; each one sought his own sins, the sins of his family and those of his people, trembling with fear and hoping to find forgiveness.

We prayed for salvation, all of us, children and grown-ups,

we wailed and implored in a mingling of voices, clear voices, dark ones, vibrant, passionate, shattering. But the sound of the cannon, the bursting shrapnel, the moaning of the wounded, were more audible on that day than our prayers.

Here, in the synagogue, was the true Fatherland, the homeland of the Jews. Here they were with Him. Here were no peasants, no pogroms. Certainly not on this day, for on this day those others were busy among themselves. On this day the Jews of eastern Europe could address themselves undisturbed to God, without fear, without haste. On this day they could make themselves understood to Him.

"Hear our entreaty . . . !"

What gave these Jews in the little Carpathian townlet the strength to pray mightily was the knowledge that on this day they were not standing before him alone. On that same day the Jews were likewise assembled in Paris, in London, in New York, in Berlin, in Vienna—and they spoke to Him in all languages, they prayed, wept, implored. In all the countries of the world the Jew sought out and acknowledged his sins on this day and hoped, with lamentation and heartbreak, that God in His infinite mercy would forgive them.

There came that tremendous, wordless prayer in which all voices are suddenly stilled. Not a word may be spoken then, but throughout the world they must stand before God and must look into His countenance openly and directly; and no one may hide himself then by bowing down, for the Jewish God does not love this bowing down, but asks straightway: "Why does this man lower his head? What has he to hide?"

All stood exhausted, their gaze fixed on the east, only their lips moved brokenly in the soundless utterance of the last, all-revealing confession. I was not yet able to understand the full greatness of this extraordinary day—but I felt its breath upon

me. I was swept along so completely in this mood of faith that I, the child, observed with resentment certain faces which expressed bitterness and impatience.

My mother, standing among the other women, recounted in simple language all her sufferings. She was quite calm as she told Him:

"My father was killed because he was a Jew. My mother was killed because she was a Jewess. My brothers were killed because they were Jews. All of them fell in Kishinev, all four on the same day, they remained Your children till the end."

I can still hear her speaking these words. She spoke without raising her voice. She knew that she had not much time. On this day God could not listen to her alone. So she had to be brief, and as calm as possible. But suddenly she lost all control of herself and cried and wept like all the others:

"But what do you want of my innocent children . . . ?"

Then it happened.

All the windows of the synagogue were shattered in a single explosion.

All the windows in the village were shattered in the same instant.

They who had been so loud but a few instants ago pressed themselves in utter dumbness against the walls.

We heard nothing but a thin whistling, carried to us from somewhere in the remote distance.

It was as if our insides were convulsed; we stood contorted, terrified, broken, shattered, and many sought shelter under their white prayer-shawls.

Mouths were black and open, eyes stood big and terror-filled in flickering faces. . . .

When many minutes had passed, the crowd tried to pull itself together again.

A commanding, defiant, courageous voice sounded above their heads, the voice of the old Rabbi.

The old ram's horn pealed fearfully.

Again the worshipers cried out aloud, but these voices no longer sounded defiant, no longer sounded courageous; it was like the cry of a wounded soldier. There came only a brief, last lament, then it was over.

Above the Carpathians fluttered a prayer which came from a little town where a bridge had been blown up. The prayer could not rise, it fluttered about timidly, ever more timidly, in a circle. It is still fluttering above the dark trees of the Carpathians. It will flutter there forever.

After this unforgettable townlet in the Carpathian mountains there came for me a day which signifies for me the end of my childhood. On this day we knew the touch of death. He did not hold us fast, he only let us feel his bony hand. But it was enough.

I have described the beginning of this memorable day in the first pages of this book.

We had been traveling for about an hour, and at last the mist had so far withdrawn that we could make out without difficulty the black outlines of the wooded mountains before us; when suddenly—it was around seven o'clock in the morning—a feverish silence descended on all the wagons. All at once the air seemed to change—and with it the breath of the refugees. Those who turned round became pale, drew their heads back, turned their gaze hastily frontward. Fear gripped the people, and even the horses ceased from their uneven neighing, while their manes bristled. The wheels rattled, dry and choked. A chill passed across the skins of the Jews.

We Fishmans, becoming aware of the riders behind us,

cowered on the floor planks of the wagon. Hands shoved us children soundlessly into the furthest corner, where we were jammed like bundles.

The interval became smaller and smaller. The nearer the group of horsemen came, the more certain was the knowledge that they were Russians. They carried long lances with fluttering pennants. The horses were small and swift.

How far away now seemed those near-by hills, which looked down as with a feeling of superiority on the road that had been built years ago for military reasons! To the right of it lay a blue-shimmering wood, left of it stood a few solitary peasant huts. On the bare lattice-fences leaned a few peasant women, dressed only in skirt and chemise.

Just as our wagon with its refugees from Strody was about to pass one of these huts, the Russians overtook us. The hoofs of the dark horses drummed dully on the firm roadbed. Broad-boned and sunburned, with cartridge belts crossed on their breasts, the Cossacks sat on their horses. To us terrified Fishmans they looked almost like supernatural, unconquerable beings from another world.

Terror filled us to the tips of our toes, but nothing happened to us. The Russians paid as little attention to us as the Austrian soldiers did. They rode on, grim and silent, behind their ataman; only their eyes peered suspiciously at every tree in the near-by wood.

I counted them; I was already able to count up to a hundred thousand.

Among those many refugees I was the only one that spoke up, for I did not know the meaning either of fear or of courage.

"There's twelve of them," I said, aloud. Then my mother put her hand on my mouth, so that my teeth hurt—and it was

only from this moment on that I began to feel dimly in what danger we were.

There and then war, naked war with death and slaughter, broke out before my childish eyes.

Just as the leading horses came to a halt, and one of the riders was pointing with stretched-out lance toward the wood, there issued from among the trees a loud crackling.

In an instant the landscape burst asunder like brittle glass.

Wildly the little Russian horses fled across the meadow.

With an inhuman cry Mother threw the cushions we had taken along over the heads of the children.

The shots rattled ceaselessly from among the trees.

It seemed to us that we saw flashing points in the air.

Two riderless horses came tearing back to the road.

Someone dragged me out of the wagon and thrust me in the direction of a house.

I ran doubled up, above us the bullets flew (" . . . whee-ee-eel whee-ee-ee, whee-ee-ee . . ."), and I fell across the threshold of a house, open-mouthed, in childish gasping, without screaming.

Inside, the peasant women stood and crossed themselves at every salvo. Mother suddenly lay on a bench, and my grandparents, wringing their hands, were trying to bring her to.

Outside, every wagon was empty. Those who had not been able to get to one of the few huts now cowered between the wheels or in the depressions by the side of the road.

The peasant women looking through the windows, and we children—no one was bothering about us—could see that of the twelve Cossacks only two had been able to escape. The others lay in the meadow, one here, one there, in the middle of the beautiful, big, green meadow, before the wood which had suddenly come alive.

"They lie like heaps of manure," said one of the peasant women.

"Here come our men!" shouted another.

They were Hungarian infantry, in dark blue uniforms. As they came past the dead bodies they fired a few more shots. They shot into the air for sheer joy, then they hung colored ribbons on their blue hats, red, white, and green ribbons. They did this as a sign of victory, and of joy that it was the Russians who lay there on the ground. This was still at the beginning of the great war.

In between, Mother came to. She rose wearily. Trembling, she stretched her hands out to us, drew us away from the window, and sat down in a corner of the big peasant hut. I saw her shake as if she had taken leave of her senses. I heard her sob, dry, tearless sobs. She kissed us with cold lips, so that the breath went out of us. Then suddenly she let go of us and became dumb. She only trembled still from head to foot. She was still trembling when we returned to the wagon. She was still trembling that evening in the little town of K.

But the wind breathed as on any other day. It caressed the earth as if nothing in the world had happened. It breathed far and wide, akin to woods, hills, and lovely grasses. Only to human beings was the wind not akin that day. Nature had withdrawn from them.

Some will regard it as a happy chance, others as nothing less than a miracle, that we managed to reach the little town of K. that same day. For that was the day on which the last refugee train left the east.

We sprang out of the ladder-wagon and flung ourselves across the rails into the yelling, struggling, ruthlessly fighting mob that surrounded this train.

Hardly had we reached the platform when blows began to fall on us. We struck back. Like everyone else we tried to squeeze through to the doors and windows of the train. Some climbed frantically onto the roofs of the cars. The soldiers tried in vain to thrust the struggling mass back from the rails. The uproar increased, grew louder and louder, no one yielded, no one wanted to remain behind, no one wanted to fall into the hands of the Cossacks, those "firebrands, woman-violators, child-slaughterers."

A dreadful panic reigned; wild madness had seized on all of them. Thus a crowd might rush for the lifeboats when the ship is sinking. Hirsch and I struck furiously, blindly, in all directions, and screamed for our mother, who was screaming for us. We fought with feet, knees, elbows, arms, hands, fingers, nails, we scratched at everyone, we bit people's fingers and calves, we pushed other children from the steps of the train.

Gasping heavily, with hands all bloody, we found ourselves at last in a cattle-car, together with Mother. We sat on a heap of straw which still smelled of the dust of a barn. Our grandparents, we thought, had managed to get into another car.

Through the holes in the sliding door of our cattle-car we looked across to the second platform. There, in an uninterrupted procession, rolled troop-trains, freight cars carrying cannon, horses, material of war. The soldiers had wreaths of oak-leaves in their hats. A sound of singing rang across the two lines of rails to the refugees. On the walls of the troop-trains was chalked:

"Six horses or forty men."

"Every shot must get one Russky."

"What price Russia?"

But for the time being the Russians were occupying a de-

stroyed Austrian province, and behind the barrier of the railroad station in this little town of K. there stood wailing, woe-begone, cursing, lamenting, protesting mothers with children in their arms, and old men stood there—people of many religions and nations. These wretched men and women, left behind, cursed, not the war, but us, the “lucky” ones, seated in the train which was at last moving off.

The threatening fists became smaller and smaller, the stones hurtling against the walls of the train became fewer, the cry of hatred and protest became fainter and fainter.

We traveled on.

The rails felt their way through the darkness, their road uncertain. Hammering and thrusting, the cars went swaying through the first autumn of the war, carrying their load of exiles. Piece by piece their former life crumbled from them. The good impulses of these people fell from them like leaves in the wintry wind. Very few were those on whom no blight fell in the ensuing years.

The history of this last refugee train which carried us Jews from Galicia is instructive in many ways. They closed the doors of the cars, and when we stopped at stations they permitted us to take a breath of air only under guard. All “good Austrians” were naturally agreed that all refugees, too, were children of the Fatherland. “Flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood,” etcetera. Above all we were a great source of material for newspaper articles and speeches.

There were swarms of committees and workers. But unfortunately everything seemed to be complicated by the fact that we came from Galicia. I can just about imagine how many speeches must have been poured forth on the subject of refugee work, with the following content:

“Quite apart from the fact that most of the refugees are

Galician Jews—which is, of course, of no consequence—quite apart from this, as I have already observed, we responsible men and women must bear in mind another, quite objective and patriotic principle, to wit: the morale of the population, which these refugees may, even without intending it, seriously disturb. For us officials, and for us men and women who have placed ourselves as volunteers at the service of the national refugee work, there emerges, out of these complications, an extremely equivocal situation, if I may so put it, which is not so easy to handle as our non-specialist friends perhaps imagine . . .”

God help us! Driven out by the Russians, we fell into the hands of the “Specialists for Refugee Problems,” into the hands of organizations for “Order and National Solidarity.” Our refugee train was pushed from city to city.

With my alert young senses I quickly absorbed the atmosphere of this wretched refugee train. This refugee train, the refugee barracks, the lice and the bedbugs, the philanthropic ladies, and above all the revulsion, necessarily veiled by sympathetic exclamations, from these “filthy Galician Jewish children”—it is this that burns in my memory like an ever-open wound, it was this that revealed to me, the seven-year-old child, a brutalized world, without killing me with shame.

First the train came to Vienna. But there were already in that city, as every newspaper wittily pointed out (I read these “witticisms” later), “more refugees than Viennese,” so we were not permitted to leave the train.

The train rattled further along the rails.

To Budapest.

From Budapest to Prague.

This train of misery, put together from old cattle-cars, stopped at all the roadside stations. Its reluctant inmates squat-

ted on heaps of straw which had become heaps of putrefaction. And at every station there waited for us ladies who, out of much philanthropy and from large baskets, distributed little sandwiches.

Since we were not permitted to get out anywhere, these ladies proceeded—accompanied by gentlemen who were very polite to these ladies—from car to car. This action, this voluntary going from car to car, appeared to them—seeing that we poor Galician refugees were very dirty (sighs, horrified glances, gestures of despair, “Oh, dear, oh, dear!”)—to be an incomparable achievement in the service of the Royal and Imperial Fatherland.

Withal, these ladies and their polite escorts (polite to the ladies, be it noted) were not altogether wrong in their verdict on our lack of cleanliness. But I often picture to myself what these fine ladies and gentlemen would have looked like if *they* had not been permitted to leave those stinking, asphyxiating cars for days on end. In these locked and rolling ice-boxes there was lack not only of air, but of water too. Insects crawled about in our clotted hair and dust-filled clothes. We had scratched ourselves raw and red. And thus the ladies, sharply observant as they were, could report, no doubt to their intense astonishment, that the refugees were given to “convulsive movements of the body, and particularly of the head,” likewise that “they glanced about them in a strange, one might almost say, animal way, which indicated fear of their unaccustomed surroundings”; they could further report, to the Refugee Bureau, and this with genuine emotion, that the “spiritual condition of the Galician child refugees bordered on the exotic.”

At that time I, the filthy and louse-infested “exotic” little refugee, spoke, besides Yiddish, which was my mother tongue,

a good Polish and German, and some Ruthenian. I was already able to translate Hebrew texts from the Bible, and knew whole pages of the prayerbook by heart. What I and the other refugees lacked was: water, fresh air, a brush, our freedom, and peace.

In one of these cars there cowered a woman who would not let go of her children's hands even when the bread and coffee were being distributed. In the nights she was only half asleep, in the day only half awake, but day and night she felt her children's hands. This woman was Leah Fishman, my mother.

The train went jolting on, from village to village, from city to city. Mother thought of America, of Father. The train rattled onward through Austria-Hungary, moving forever in circles. Mother thought anxiously of our grandparents; we had lost them. I too asked after them. Hirsch too. But neither of us asked after Father. We had quite forgotten that we had a father who lived in New York.

But once they did let us get out. We came to one of the numerous refugee barracks. A hundred and fifty refugees were already in the place when they thrust us, two hundred in number, among the others.

We could see from the outside that doors and windows had been smashed and stove in. Within there was the stink of bed-bugs, lice, other insects, filthy heaps of straw, and the putrefying mattresses which sympathetic souls had donated for our use. And in their ragged, tattered, dust-filled, dirty clothes there stank: the refugees themselves, children, women, a pitiful, tormented heap of humanity, miserable human remnants.

The word was still:

"They are Austrians, decent fellow-citizens in flight from the Russians . . ."

Twelve months later these decent fellow-citizens had become "damned Galicians."

For the time being there were still eyes for this wretchedness. The feeling of charity had not yet become dulled. For the time being everyone who could gave something, not only out of pity, but also out of a feeling of solidarity. No one could tell whether a day would not come when the Russians would roll like a tide over the entire country. They helped from a feeling of their own weakness—weakness in the face of this horrible war and of those who were, so far, the victors in it. When they brought us things to wear—it had already become quite cold—and came with their loads of bread, sausage, knives and forks, plates, they were in this way beating the enemy back and stilling their own fears. That this view is not far-fetched was proved in the ensuing months, to wit, when the Russians withdrew, and with them the charitableness of our fellow-citizens.

But certain things it is fitting to remember: I have to thank all those who regarded this help as a human duty and obligation, and not as a pastime or as a means of "being in on" the right thing. I thank all those who did not let me die of hunger, who tried to feed me and keep me warm; and before all others I thank all those who found words of comfort for my mother when they saw her with us in the wretchedness which was not of our making.

Already then I understood that good persons are rare.

In the city where the refugee barracks were situated, most of the people shouted after us those two words which since that time have stuck to my feet like pitch:

"Dirty Jew!"

At the time little was said concerning our sufferings, later nothing at all. The world which had begun the war, and tol-

erated it, transformed many of us overnight into beggars, paupers, anti-social beings, creatures without an anchor. For most of us lost during these years everything that serves as anchor: homeland, family, a roof of one's own, and, above all, belief in oneself.

In the two immense halls that served as dormitories for the refugees, tiny babies wailed, epileptics fell in fits, some even went out of their senses.

The Red Cross was compelled to put up an emergency ward in our barracks (soon, soon they would be saying: "For those damned Galician Jews!"). Unguents were distributed against the insects and for the raw bites and wounds in our skins. There was rice-powder for the babies, a rabbi for us, several priests for the Christians, and milk for women suckling their young.

The mothers had a fearful task with the heads of their children. My mother had to wash our heads daily, for the lice which bred there could be suppressed for only twenty-four hours at a time. She killed the older insects, but in the same night the younger brood, which she was not skillful enough to destroy when she squashed the older ones on a piece of mirror, emerged. Mother became continuously more restless, more exhausted. For her this campaign was no outing, she collapsed visibly into herself, and she was still so young.

("There are plenty of trees in our kingdom. There's one ready for her, too," was the cheerful remark, about that time, of good-natured Councilor Sekira, head of the counter-espionage service.)

In order to earn a little money, the refugees went out in search of work. They sewed military blankets, rolled cigarettes, darned socks, did lacework. We too wanted to earn a few

heller. Mother got herself a package of tobacco and a thousand gummed cigarette papers. The tobacco was still damp and smelt strongly as she spread it out on a large sheet of paper. She took hold, not very skillfully, of the little wooden rod and the scissors, and she began to fill the cigarette papers, which tore easily. I put together fifty cigarettes by count, and cut away the protruding tobacco at either end. Then Hirsch filled the boxes. We children learned this work laughing, and we were very proud of it. Mother was very sad.

Then I can recall how we lived in a low clay hut, the last "building" in the town, right on the edge of endless cabbage fields and in the neighborhood of the railroad station.

I can see myself and other children, refugee children. On the fields stand wagons piled high with cabbages which cannot be carted away because there are no horses. We sneak into the fields. We steal a hundred cabbages and more every day. It is our only food.

Soon we steal other things, too. On the rails in the station open freight trains wait in vain for locomotives, which have all been drawn into the war. On the cars lie, within reach, many valuable treasures: wood, coal. And cabbages, tremendous heaps of cabbages.

Mother does not know that we steal. She thinks we get the cabbages as gifts from the kindly local Jews. How she weeps every time we come home with full sacks—but what a weeping there would be if she knew that her two children belong to a regular band of thieves, made up of refugee children under the leadership of a seventeen-year-old red-head!

She has no more strength. She weeps much. Very much. Every day there is cabbage. Morning, noon, and night, cabbage, only cabbage. We steal more than we can eat. The longer

our vagabondage lasts, the more we like it. When Mother questions us where we have been we tell her, with masterly skill, the most plausible stories. We stole from strangers and lied to Mother.

And every night, in spite of our protests, mother still hunts in our heads and clothes for lice and fleas. A flea-hunt at least provides some interest. The little creatures hide cunningly in the dusty seams of our trousers and jackets, and when you try to catch them they hop away as nimbly as we do from the cabbage fields or the freight trains when someone is after us. Lice are, by contrast, a dull species: downright fat, blood-sucking good-for-nothings, hardly moving when Mother lifts them out of our bushy hair with wet fingers, throws them onto a piece of mirror and cracks them with her fingernails.

We steal, lie, indulge in dirty talk about all grown-ups, and even smoke cigarettes which a member of our gang steals from a shop in the town. But Mother tortures us every morning and every evening with that stupid washing. She acts as if nothing had happened, as though, for us children at least, nothing had changed. She knew nothing of this dreadful gang life of ours. We lied too skillfully. So deep were we thrust by the war, which I shall never cease to hate.

In order to earn a little more Mother gets her tobacco in the leaf and cuts it herself with a knife, as she used to cut noodles once in Strody, only much finer. In this way she fills, in the course of the year, fifty thousand cigarette papers, which number pass through my little hands reeking of wet tobacco. Then came the great change in our life. . . .

One day my mother heard her name called on the street. She turned round with a frightened cry, and there behind her stood Rivkah Singer, from Strody.

First the two women cried, then they went together to the home of the Singers. These had been lucky enough to reach this town before the concentration barracks had been instituted. They actually had a real honest-to-goodness house, with a window and two doors and even a wooden floor.

The women looked out of this window. The house stood at the other end of the town. On an open stretch of land soldiers were digging holes, other soldiers poured a whole bucketful of quicklime into each hole. Rivkah explained to my astonished mother that the quicklime was to prevent the cholera from spreading.

"But why are the holes so big?"

"They are mass graves. For the soldiers who die in the hospital."

Then Rivkah's husband, Mendel Singer, came into the house; he coughed and groaned just as he used to in Strody. He brought an important piece of news with him from the town.

"A lot of refugees will be going to Germany. They need workers there. Women can get work, too."

Mother came back to the clay hut and put salve on the raw, scratched places on our heads.

Nights she lay on the heap of straw, between Hirsch and me, and did not sleep.

I too was often awake through half the night, but I gave no sign of it.

There was a strong smell of cabbage.

Mother tossed restlessly about; a waking dream melted into a great, as yet indefinite, lure: Germany, Herr von Schiller, Herr Lessing. . . .

When we came home from our thieving expeditions (for

Mother: from our walks in the town), when we had finished our daily stint of cigarettes, she washed our heads with kerosene.

Evenings she again cracked the lice which fell on the piece of mirror, their cemetery.

Then she smeared salve on our scratched wounds.

Then she threw herself wearily on the straw, but not before she had washed us thoroughly. But she hardly ever slept.

This was now her life and the life of her children: crushing lice, hunting fleas, the bed of straw, sleepless nights, cabbages, cabbages, cabbages. . . .

(Did she perhaps, after all, know something of our life, of our stealing, our lying, our vagabond existence? . . .)

She was already weighing things. On the one hand Germany, on the other the clay hut. Many were going. Should she be among those who remained behind? Should she take shelter here through the entire war, and look on helplessly while her children went to pieces? . . . She was still hesitating when Rivkah came to say good-by.

What was she to do? Go along with the others?

She already calculated that from Germany it was nearer to America than from this place. The ship's tickets were kept safely in her bosom, in a purse hanging from a strong ribbon.

"Why are you thinking it over so long? Is it so hard to make a choice between Germany and *this* life?" asked Rivkah.

"But my parents-in-law?"

"Can you find them now?"

Leah had no answer to that.

"When the war is over you'll look for them. But now you must get away from here. If only for your children's sake, you must get away from here!"

It was we children who gave the final thrust.

The Commission

THIS time it was a railroad station on the Austrian frontier. This time it was not gentlemen from Berlin, but Viennese who stood on the platform and awaited Yossel Fishman. They were not dressed in discreet civilian clothes but in dark military overcoats.

Among them stood an assistant doctor, a certain Dr. Spiegel, naturally "one of those bandy-legged Jewish medicos among our forces."

While going through various documents they had discovered, quite accidentally, that a certain doctor who derived from that hole Strody was serving in a war hospital in Klosterneuburg, near Vienna. He was taken along so that he might confront the suspect and state whether the man who called himself Yossel Fishman had any right whatsoever to the use of that name.

The gentlemen stood earnest and silent like a waiting court. The wind whirled paper and dirt across the tracks. A mist lay on the river Elbe, the deep hum of a ship's signal sent a warning through the gray, impenetrable autumn day.

"Our train from Berlin is late, of course," said the waiting gentlemen irritably. They were very displeased and impatient. They threw their overcoat collars back moodily. Dr. Spiegel

stood somewhat to a side, ignored, his hat at an unfortunate angle on the back of his head. He was thinking, as he froze:

"What sort of comedy are these high gentlemen playing now? Who on earth could it be, if not Yossel himself? Who could have any purpose in calling himself Yossel Fishman if he doesn't have to?"

Then the train came.

Yossel ran straight toward the officers. Behind him his "shadow" blew his nose into a green handkerchief, the agreed signal. The gentlemen already began to move forward. But when Yossel suddenly saw the gray face of Dr. Nachum Spiegel rise up before him, he turned from the approaching group of officers and flung himself on the solitary doctor, whose skeptical, embittered face stood out much more strongly than his uniform. It did not matter what he wore; his face cast a pallor on everything, even the most brightly colored clothes.

Without stopping to wonder at this Strody encounter, Yossel cried in a choked voice:

"Doctor, where's my Leah?"

The doctor pressed both his hands in wholly unmilitary fashion and lied, uncertainly to be sure, but without blushing:

"They are all of them, beyond any doubt, in Vienna."

Two reports were immediately prepared.

Dr. Spiegel dictated a clear statement for one of them, and then attested it.

"Who knows?" murmured Captain Sedlotchek. "These Jews are all as thick as thieves."

The other report transmitted complete details of personal information concerning Yossel Fishman to the military authorities. "Your year has already been called to the colors," he was told. "Within five days you must report, in this and this precinct, in Vienna, for mobilization."

Yossel stammered respectfully that he had come from America only to fetch his wife and children.

The officers glanced at his passport, which was Austrian.

"Within five days," said the captain, curtly. "You understand?"

"No," repeated Yossel, stupefied.

They gave it to him in writing.

"The work these Jews make for us!!!" growled our Captain Sedlotchek. "These wanderers! These eternal migrants! It's only with Jews we have this work."

"I think there ought to be a special and secondary mobilization call for our friends the Jews," came in support from Lieutenant Wagener, who had a reputation as a pretty wit.

Dr. Spiegel did not remain quiet. He said:

"Gentlemen!" (What else could he have said, clever and courageous reader?)

"Oh, but please! Of course we don't mean *you*," smiled the captain and his first lieutenant. Both of them slapped the Jewish doctor "among our forces" in the friendliest fashion on his reluctant shoulder.

For four days Yossel searched Vienna.

He looked in all the barracks, in the "Refugee Bureaus," in the streets.

On the fifth day he did not look any more. He reported for mobilization.

There was not the slightest doubt that he, with his eyes, and in his present condition, would be declared "unfit for service." He had the crumpled look of a pair of unpressed trousers. So he was quite calm when, a naked man, he appeared before the Examining Commission.

In front of the long table a white circle had been drawn with

chalk on the waxed floor, and Yossel had to stand inside the circle.

His papers lay on the table. The gentlemen on the other side of the table stuck their noses into the document. "Interesting, very interesting indeed! This man comes to us direct from America!"

A nameless assistant doctor examined Yossel's shrunken body. He proclaimed his findings in a loud, ambitious voice. A clerk repeated the items and wrote them down. At the table a regimental surgeon played with his pince-nez. The General Staff doctor thumbed some documents. The voice of the assistant doctor dictated:

"Build slender, condition of nourishment good, appearance fresh.

"Height, five feet six inches.

"Weight, one hundred and thirty-seven pounds.

"Chest measurement, thirty-one point nine.

"Heart, no notation.

"Lungs, no notation.

"Nervous and mental system, eyes excepted: one hundred per cent.

"Eye-condition: myopia of both eyes. Range of vision without glasses: right eye, twenty by two hundred; left eye, twenty by one hundred. Range of vision with glasses: right eye twenty by one hundred; left eye, twenty by fifty.

"Pulse: medium, regular, seventy-five.

"Urine: clear and yellow, no sugar or albumin."

All sensation had left Yossel.

He did not feel the poking, kneading, thrusting, and listening fingers of the doctor.

He was thinking: "I came to Europe to look for my wife, my children, my parents, I've got weak eyes, they'll let me go,

I didn't come to Europe to be a soldier, but to look for my wife, my children, I've got weak eyes, they'll let me go. . . ."

No one seemed to be aware of Yossel Fishman's inner torment; on the contrary, the gentlemen at the table seemed to find that he made excellent military material. Even before the medical report had actually been reduced to writing, the chief of this department had already ornamented an order with Yossel's name. The purpose of this order was to transfer the soldier Yossel Fishman to the scene of war. One might almost have thought that this man who transformed the civilian Yossel into the soldier Fishman derived immense pleasure from his official duties. For he smiled cheerfully as he passed the signed paper to his neighbor. Had he listened at all to the medical opinion of the examining doctor? And if he had, was he in any way concerned with the verdict of a nameless medical assistant, was he going to be put out by an academic report? He relied on the judgment of his eye.

". . . but I didn't come to Europe to be a soldier, I came to fetch my wife, my children, my parents . . ."

Yossel's thoughts still went round and round. Even after everything had been decided. A word tore him from his un-military dreaming. . . .

"Fit for front-line service," said a voice in uniform.

"Fit for front-line service," echoed the pen.

"Fit for front-line service?" asked Yossel, stupefied.

So they gave it to him in writing.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dr. Spiegel when Yossel came to him in a state of collapse, a sick pallor on his face. "Impossible! You're not fit for front-line service! Take your coat off. I want to examine your heart."

Dr. Spiegel was greatly excited. But Yossel Fishman was

not excited, not in the slightest. He took his coat off apathetically, strengthlessly he slipped out of his shirt.

The doctor applied his ear. He did not like the heart condition, nor did he find the lungs to be in normal working order.

"And what did they say about your eyes?"

"I don't know," said Yossel, bewildered.

"The old sickness is still there," Dr. Spiegel confirmed. "The old doublesided darkening of the cornea. The visual power can't be improved to any extent by glasses."

Weak and helpless Yossel put his clothes on again.

Dr. Spiegel promised that he would speak that very day with the regimental doctor, an important member of the Commission. But how was he to know that it was this regimental doctor himself who, in the examination which was conducted by an assistant medical, had devoted exactly sixteen seconds of his attention to the future soldier, Fishman? Sunk in a dream as he was, the eyes of this gentleman had wandered to that spot on the naked man's body which was specifically Jewish. And after these sixteen seconds his attention had turned away from the man and back to his new pince-nez. The good regimental doctor had had this new pince-nez for only two days.

Dr. Spiegel could not, of course, suspect the existence of such complications. But at bottom all of life rests on such complications.

And thus my father went off to the front.

The regimental band played:

"Rei-eign fore-ever, Crow-own of Habsburg,
Li-inked with Austria's fa-ate and la-and.
Hai-ail Franz Josef, ha-ail Eli-isen,
E-evermo-ore will Au-austria stand . . . !"

In Germany

SO there my father goes marching. But what happened meanwhile to his family?

We had been living for some weeks in Germany, in a little town in Saxony. Mother went every morning to the factory, the ironware factory of Scheibe and Koch. Hand grenades were being turned there, and all she had to do was take steel rings out of a box, count them, rub them with oil, and carry them to the factory stockrooms on the other side of the grounds. At midday she came home quickly, she had prepared her midday meal the night before, she needed only to warm it up.

We children went to school. At first Hirsch and I were put in the same class, the lowest. After two weeks I was moved up one class, and after three months another. I made rapid progress, and Hirsch too soon became one of the best pupils in the first grade. When the six best pupils in every class were given prizes by the principal of the elementary school, Hirsch and I brought two copies of the same book to Mother at the factory gate: *The Economy War Cookery Book: Patriotic Advice on Cheap Meals for the Heroic German Housewife*.

But apart from this Mother had small ground for happiness. She had sent many postal cards to Vienna and Prague, to all

the "Refugee Bureaus," but no one knew where the grandparents were. She also sent letters to America. To New York, to Father. One day the first letter came back after long, round-about travels. On it was written, in three languages: "Addressee gone without leaving address." How terrified she was! Thus, one after the other, she got all her American letters back. What had happened to Father? Her face became thinner and sadder under her rough, dark hair.

I remember that she took little nourishment; most of the time two spoonfuls was enough for her, and I do not believe that in those days it was want that prevented her from taking more. She was earning, if not a great deal, enough for the three of us. She was sated with the bitterness she had swallowed day by day these many months. She was always pale. Her eyes were swollen with weeping, but I must affirm that in all these months I never saw her weep in our presence. In our free hours she sent us down into the yard of the house in which we had our room, to play with other children of our age. On the very first day of our arrival we had discovered new friends. Mother wanted to bear her crushing fate alone.

A change for the better had come over us children. Today I know that the cabbage-stealing, the lying to Mother, the forbidden climbing into the freight trains, the secret smoking of stolen cigarettes, were all an expression of the instinct of self-preservation in children who had not yet learned social, moral, and ethical inhibitions. We had been starving, the adult refugees received very little in an honest way, we lived on the edge of a field on which hundreds of thousands of cabbages were growing. What could be more natural than that a seven-year-old child, one of a band of boys, should go after those cabbages? And then the climbing into the freight trains with trousers which could hardly become more tattered than they

were; this secret lifting of merchandise, of wood, of coal, and of fruit from railroad cars which had obviously been placed there for us by the hand of an "ever-compensating destiny"—granted, our stealing and lying were unquestionably a wild and not undangerous descent into the human abyss, but mingled with this serious aspect there was likewise a great deal of purely childish playfulness. I had not betrayed these anti-social tendencies in Strody, nor did I betray them again after that "clay hut" period; I therefore feel myself justified in attributing that "criminal childhood" to the war, that monster which plunged the whole world into bloodthirsty barbarity.

But let me return to Mother. How she must have worried during those days in Germany!

There's America, there's Strody, and in between a war without end, a life of horrible aimlessness. And where is Father? She must get to know.

Nights she would take the single sock which, with the silver candlesticks, was all that she had brought along from Strody, and put it under her pillow. When she was still a little girl in Kishinev an old aunt had told her that this was the way to do if she wanted to speak in her dreams with an absent person. Before going to sleep she had to say, three times: "Come to me and tell me what you're doing now, and how it is with you."

And that was what Mother did, but she dreamt only of a coffin. But—"Thank God," she sighed with relief—it was not Yossel who lay in the coffin, but she herself. It made her feel much calmer.

And again she wrote to all the "Refugee Bureaus": "Where are Leib and Malka Fishman, of Strody?" Mother had them record our present German address in Vienna. "Perhaps," she thought, "they'll find the grandparents for us."

One day we received the information that Malka Fishman, and her husband Leib Fishman, of Strody, had both died in the same week, the wife first and her husband four days later. They were buried in the townlet of Levin, near Leitmeritz, in Bohemia, where they had taken refuge.

Mother took off her shoes. She sat down on a low stool, a light burned night and day. She repeated prayers with us. Again she made a special effort not to cry in our presence. But I heard her near me in the nights, her shoulders shook convulsively, and the cushion which we shared was wet. There was only one bed in the room, and the three of us slept in it.

So now we were without grandparents.

Then Mother lost her job in the factory. I don't know how this happened; perhaps it was because she was too weak, and perhaps it was because she had stayed away during the week of mourning; and then again, perhaps she had to be laid off because she was a foreigner.

In any case, she was home for two or three weeks, but she ran around a great deal to find some other kind of work; for what were we to live on?

A foreigner . . . At that time I did not know what the word meant. Since then I have known in a hundred ways the tragic content of that concept. There my mother was, an utter stranger in a warring country whose language she spoke but poorly, and two children with her; she alone had to find nourishment for all three. It would have been difficult enough for one who belonged to the place; how much more difficult must it not have been for a poor foreign Jewess like Mother?

But now I want to tell how we "foreigners" were treated during those war days by the German officials.

We went, Mother leading her two children by the hand, to register at the police-station in this little town in Saxony.

In the office of the police-station sat a young man with a clubfoot, and Mother at once felt a great pity for him.

How human it all was as yet, in spite of everything. Mother pitied the official and the official pitied us. It is not often that I have seen so fine an encounter between two strangers. And the parties concerned were—a German official and a “Galician Jewess.”

When Mother began to tell him (we stood in front of a table) where we came from, and all that we had gone through, the young man sitting in front of us suddenly felt upon him the breath of a world that could not be found in the newspapers. A romantic longing to “do a good deed” seized this as yet unpetrified official. A little waveringly he stood up and offered his chair to my frightened mother.

Timidly Mother asked: “May I remain here in Germany?”

The youth facing her answered with all his heart:

“But why not? The very idea! You Austrians are our brothers in arms, of course you may remain here.”

He wanted Mother to tell him more about our life as refugees. She spoke a very faulty German, nevertheless he understood everything. A storm of romantic sensibilities out of his earliest childhood awoke in him and shook him to the depths. He asked my mother to wait a moment while he stepped out. When he returned he pressed two cakes of chocolate into her hand.

In the school, too, we were the “war heroes.”

We remained such until Germany lost the war.

After that they called us by less flattering names.

But that is another story.

Here I must recount an episode of my childhood in exile: the name-change of my brother Hirsch. One day he was transformed into a "Hermann," an honest-to-goodness German Hermann.

And here is how it happened.

Certain east-European Jews, who had been living in this town for some decades, had, on extremely cogent grounds, advised my mother to change her younger son's given name. One should not, as they put it, tempt fate. Germany was, true enough, a tolerant country. We, as refugees from Galicia, had also been received in very humane fashion. Still and all . . . The Jews who had been living here a long time had already had their experiences.

"The older boy's name is Jacob? Well, all right. Lots of people in Germany go by that name. He won't attract particular attention, so he can go on being called Jacob," was the opinion of the butcher Herr S. Klein. "But the younger boy's called Hirsch, and that's an *impossible* name. The Germans don't like anyone to be different. With a name like Hirsch your younger son will always be an outsider here, even if he isn't one in any other way. Call him 'Hermann'; it isn't a bad name, no one can crack jokes about it, and no one will avoid him merely on account of his name. If a man's name happens to be Moses or, worse still, Abraham—God help us!—he can never get away from those little jokes of theirs. It starts in the kindergarten, and even the mason who chisels the name on his gravestone makes fun of it. As though 'Emil' and 'August' were prettier names."

"But we're not going to remain here," Mother said, reluctantly. "My husband's in America, and when the war's over we're going to him."

"Well, what of it?" replied Herr S. Klein. "In America he'll be neither Hirsch nor Hermann. Over there you'll find other customs and other names. I believe that over there the Hirsches are Henrys or Harrys."

"I still don't see the point," my mother dared to say.

The butcher shrugged his shoulders. "If you come to live in a country, you've got to meet it half-way. Foreign names aren't much liked anywhere, sometimes they're hated. And this hatred passes easily from the name to the owner of it. Would you want that, young woman?"

"No!" cried my mother. "I'm an utter stranger in this country. I'll do everything that's necessary."

"That business with the name is definitely necessary," Herr S. Klein instructed her.

Now my mother turned to the peddler's life. She did, indeed, look for work in a factory or workshop or store, but in vain; she did not speak German well enough for the first, the second found her too Yiddish, the third employed no foreigners. So nothing remained for mother but to slip into that well-known no-man's land of the middleman, where she would be confronted by none of the above-mentioned considerations, and where she would have to work herself to the bone in order to keep us alive.

By chance she had become acquainted with a certain red-headed Jew, a goodhearted man who had been living in the country for fifteen years, and who owned a junk and rag business. This man, who came from Vilna and was therefore a Russian, had to report to police headquarters once a day, as an "enemy alien," but was otherwise unmolested and went freely about his business, which at this time consisted in collecting old sacks and selling them to wholesale firms in Berlin. Be-

cause he had himself been an immigrant, this Vilna Jew was quick to understand the destitution which, with the loss of her job, threatened my mother, so he offered to let her travel through the near-by villages and collect old sacks for him. I happen to know that he gave her a higher price for these sacks than he did to the other peddlers. I am sure that we children had something to do with that, for in later years too this childless junk and rag merchant gave evidence of a genuine, almost fatherly interest in my brother and me.

For all that it was no easy task for my mother, my poor little Jewish mother, to earn the daily bread of three of us. Day after day, week after week, in rain and snow, she set out mornings for the villages, and dragged herself home evenings, the heavy sacks on her back. The hard life began to transform her into one of those silent persons who have lost the conviction that somehow, some day, Providence will straighten things out for them.

She did indeed say to herself: "Well, God wants every person to help himself, to show himself willing to work, not just to stand by with folded arms." Mother did not want to stand by with folded arms. She wanted to show that she was willing to work. She was sure that God would help, would redeem the Fishman family from the misfortunes that had befallen it. Often she said to herself that if God would only think once of Kishinev, of Strody, of the flight, of the dead Fishmans, of Yossel in America, of the poor children, if He would think of these just once, He would extend His help to her without a moment's hesitation. And every day she prayed to God that He might think once of the fate of the Fishmans.

When the roads were bogs of filth she still plodded from village to village, while the air was heavy with the scents of flowers and fruits and vegetables. Hens clucked their greeting to her,

the fences were painted green, from the far-off edges of the woods came the rattle of the sawmills. The peasants were away in the war, and the peasant women were friendly to my mother. In the grass-grown yards the peasant girls wrestled, all alone, with the piles of hay and the mowing-machines, for the farm workers were fighting in France and Russia. My tired mother smelt the sourish fumes which went up out of the milk-pails. Often she sat in a peasant hut and drank the warm milk which they gave her without payment. She soon became known. She went, in the tiny hamlets, by the name of "Old-Sack Leah." On her back, which had never known a burden before, she carried her load of sacks to the city, to the red-haired Jew, who was waiting for her.

We, too, waited for our poor mother.

How wonderful were those hours when she remained in the city and went walking with us in the streets! She was proud of us, her children, because we spoke a perfect German without the trace of an accent. But she still spoke a mixture of Yiddish and German, while with us children she spoke only Yiddish. "Mother," we often begged her, "don't speak Yiddish in the street." Today my face burns when I remember how I, a boy of eight, was ashamed of my mother because she, the immigrant, spoke to us in her mother tongue. But I knew even then that if I spoke Yiddish in the street, the street urchins would shout "Sheeny!" and "Jewboy!" after us—and that the grown-ups, with those mean, deceitful grins which even in my childhood made me choke with rage and tremble with impotence, would call their offspring away, and whisper to them:

"Come, children, leave those Jew-stinkers alone!"

I cannot forget how, one day, two of my closest playmates said to me: "Mama said you're a dirty little kike, and we mustn't play any more with dirty little kikes."

On that day—Mother was away in the villages—I, the child, knew the thoughts and emotions of a murderer.

I remember that I hurried home, crushed, all alone, for the other children had left me standing there in the meadow.

The street was darkened.

I made a detour round the house in which I lived, and was ashamed to go in.

So here, too, I was a "dirty Jew."

I sobbed and panted and tried desperately to fight my tears down.

Had that "Mama" appeared before me then (I trembled so, like a beaten dog) I would have killed her.

This murder-fantasy was, naturally enough, strongly bound up with the war. I shoved my hands into my trouser-pockets, I drew forth, with lightning swiftness, two huge pistols (of course, I had nothing in my hands, the pistols were imaginary), and I said: "You're as dead as a door-nail!" or: "Here's a present from the dirty little kike!"

But still I did not dare to go into the house, and I had finally to be fetched. How I cried that evening! My mother let me cry myself out, then she spoke earnestly and urgently to me. I understood little of what she said, but her voice did me a world of good.

And so, when the three of us went through the streets together, we begged her not to speak Yiddish. What did we children understand of life? And Mother at once did her best to speak German. I even believe that she was actually proud of us. In any case, she certainly was not angry with us.

We stopped at the shop windows and taught Mother the German names for the goods shown there. Sometimes we sat down on a bench and Mother told us of her plans for us in America. We were to be doctors, or lawyers, or merchants, or engineers;

anyhow, "something decent." She had her plans for the coming year, and for the years to follow. We listened attentively and believed every word. She did not suspect, and we children suspected even less, if possible, that it was no longer worth her while to make plans. Next year? She would not live into it. America? She would never set eyes on it. "Next year, God willing . . ." she dreamed. But God was not willing. This was to be one of our last walks together. The ground was covered with leaves. The trees already looked like skeletons.

We returned to the garret which was our home. In it stood a bed, a table, a stove, two chairs, a kitchen dresser, and on the dresser the two silver candlesticks.

On Friday evenings Mother lit two candles in them. She stood long before the flickering, wavering little flames, she held her hands before her face, and we children looked up at her from the other side of the table. We were never able to make out whether Mother wept or prayed at the lighting of the Sabbath candles. Her hands hid all her face.

That evening we went to bed early. No lamp burned in the room, the candles faded into a glimmer, the wicks died silently at last in the molten tallow.

In a low voice Mother told us strange stories.

She told us of a certain place which she called Strody.

I remembered a well, I remembered two old people whom I used to call "Grandfather" and "Grandmother."

Hermann no longer remembered anything.

And yet it was really not so long since we had left Strody.

Then a wretched time set in for me. I observed that a dreadful change was coming over Mother. I was, after all, still a child, and yet I felt and saw how she suffered, without knowing from what.

Often she moaned aloud, a deep, strengthless moaning, even when we were in the room. She did not send us down into the yard any more in order that she might be alone with her despair. Often she looked at us as though she were staring through a sheet of glass. Was she ill?

Devoid of energy, emptied, exhausted to death, she collapsed on the bed as soon as she got into the house. I stood near her. Her lips were distorted with pain. But she did not speak.

She put food for us on the table, she took none for herself. When we asked her why she did not want to eat, we received no answer. She drew up her knees and rested her tired head on them; she sat silent, with a listening face, but I think she listened only to herself.

She became lonelier and more wordless; often she was irritable.

"Mama, what's the matter?" I asked, anxiously. Every day, for weeks, I asked her this question.

She did not answer.

She was passing her life in review, and she found that it needed no answer.

She became hard and sometimes angry.

The Soldier

I AM sure that my father was a poor soldier. I cannot imagine a less soldierly human being than he was. How often he must have felt himself lost and confused and superfluous in this role!

When it was decided that the regiment to which he belonged had received enough training, it was ordered to the front. In the gray dawn the soldiers boarded the cattle-cars, on which was still chalked:

“Six horses or forty men.”

“What price Russia?”

“Every shot must get one Russky.”

The train pulled its heavy load eastward, and when it halted at night Yossel did not know if he had traveled a day or a whole year. In the middle of the line the men were told to get off.

In the morning Yossel awoke, the cold had awakened him. He had camped in the open for the first time in his life.

That same morning he first saw wounded men; they lay on straw, body next to body, whimpering and screaming and smelling evilly.

Yossel, who was not destined to become much of a warrior, lost his balance at this sight, and fainted away.

When he came to again (a flask of ammonia shoved under his nose brought him round in fifteen seconds), he realized that until this moment he had not known what "war" was.

He began to pray, one eager supplication after the other. He felt like a man shipwrecked and stranded. He held on tight to a piece of wood. Suddenly it occurred to him that this piece of wood was his rifle, butt upward, barrel held downward, altogether against the regulations.

"What's that over there?" someone yelled at him.

"Yes, sir . . ." thought Yossel mechanically, and perhaps said it, too. He turned the rifle into the regulation position, barrel up, butt down, and as he did it he reeled, as if he were already wounded.

Of what avail was it that something in him screamed, that a tormented being whimpered for help, for pity; that in murmured words and unspoken thoughts he sent up a complaint which tore his soul? Of what avail was it that with his last strength he implored justice and compassion, now in a bitter outcry, now in a choked whisper, which made his heart tremble and his limbs give way under him? Was *one* man moved? Did *one* man hear him . . . ?

No. And well for him that it was so.

War is not among the easy occupations, and not every Yossel is fit for it. Private Fishman's first achievement in the war was to walk his feet raw. Nor is this a laughing matter. He just could not keep up with the perpetual marching.

Reluctant and broken-spirited he walked, marched, ran, advanced, retreated, lay down on his stomach, kneeled, at the word of command. Perhaps he did not even notice that around him a world was crashing and bursting asunder. He was too busy thinking of us.

I doubt even whether he noticed what an odd impression he

made in his platoon, in which every man had a red tassel hanging from his chest, for good marksmanship—except himself. Hour after hour he went marching along in the column of singing soldiers and felt nothing. There was in him neither patriotism, nor lust of battle, nor war enthusiasm, nor any other soldierly virtue.

He did not get wounded at first. He advanced very cautiously. Whenever he took a step forward he looked like a blind man, like a man without confidence. And it must be admitted that actually he did not have any excessive confidence in those who led him. The lieutenant in command of his platoon, be it observed, was a Jew of the name of Roth. This Roth, a Viennese chemist, tall as a lamp-post, was daring to the point of foolhardiness; he was perpetually urging his men forward, displaying, at the same time, a boundless personal courage. But this courage had no influence whatsoever on Yossel. It did not spur him on to emulation. The whole business had a totally different complexion for him: he was looking for his family, he had come from America for that purpose—and here they were holding him, they were forcing him to make war on somebody, they would not let him go.

When he had to shoot at human beings for the first time (men whom God had formed in His own image!) he saw before him, not the squat, leaping olive-drab Russians, but only Leah and the children. In that universal tumult he shouted out our names. He ran, he stumbled awkwardly toward one side, always toward one side. Back he could not go, for there the officers of his own regiment stood and stopped all cowards. He fired his gun twice, into the air (not at human beings, O God!!), then he fell to the ground, did not move, and the ghastly uproar passed over him.

Was he frightened? Was he a coward? Yes and no. What ter-

rified him more than anything else was the ear-splitting din.

He was not a war hero. Definitely not. A hero does not ask every moment: "Where is my wife?" A hero is kept busy by the battle. But Yossel was kept busy by his family.

And the last of his spirit left him when on a certain Sabbath the Jewish First Lieutenant Roth commanded him to shoot! On a Sabbath!

But the war became old, gray, clayey, brown and red with rust.

Shedding of blood, shedding of tears—that was the war.

It didn't matter any more, Sabbath or no Sabbath.

Then began the retreat of the Russians. My father's regiment, leading the advance, occupied a certain townlet. The name of it was Strody.

Trembling in all his limbs, the soldier entered a house, the front wall of which was adorned by an iron balcony—like a bashed-in nose on a shattered face. Instead of walls there were only heaps of bricks in the rooms, above which the sky twinkled quietly.

There was a ladder going down into the cellar, the steps were gone. The soldier descended into the cellar, holding a candle in his shaking hand. Below was nothing but desolation. Boxes were broken open, furniture lay in splinters, scattered in all the corners between shattered, empty barrels.

The soldier who saw all this became ashen pale. As ashen pale as old Leib Fishman on the day of our flight. He stuck the candle into the broken neck of one of the dusty bottles lying around. Then suddenly it occurred to him that he had begun once to build a happy future. That every step he had taken, every mouthful of food he had eaten, had been calculated and planned. That he had taken flight from this village of Strody,

from "those others," because they had not let him live like a human being. And that now, when he believed he was holding happiness in his grasp, it was "those others," again, who had destroyed it. He quite forgot that a Jew seeking out sin and error may smite only his own breast.

His nerves gave way, they slid out from under Private Fishman like a sword not fastened on in the regulation manner. He was always on the point of collapse, and what was most horrible about it was—that he was no longer afraid of death. It was not fear for his own life that made him whimper our names, when all around him they were yelling "Hurrah!"

His face had become like a single gray line. The rain fell ceaselessly on the shot-riddled, bottomless morasses of Galicia. Horses lay before the soldiers, horses with ripped-open bellies, their four limbs stretched out from them, stinking, putrefying. Among them lay dead men, with ripped-open bellies, their four limbs stretched out from them, stinking, putrefying. Fat flies and worms rolled off from decaying horseflesh onto decaying human flesh. . . .

The soldier stumbled among the corpses and the dead material of war. Here and there the thought flickered through to him that after all one had to ask: "What's all this for . . . ?" and he nearly went out of his mind because he was still capable of asking, but received no answer. The best soldiers were those who were no longer capable of asking.

A crucial time began for Yossel. Every soldier who still retains something of the human being knows this phase of his war days, when his most dangerous enemy, his most mortal foe, is entrenched within him, and from within fires his shots at heart and brain and soul. Private Fishman was steadily approaching this phase. True, he continued to wear the regulation uniform and equipment of the soldier, and yet he already made

the impression that not he, but somebody else, was wearing them.

Then came the letter in which he had in fact ceased to believe. In answer to his many inquiries he finally received the information that a certain Leah Fishman, née Seltzer (with two children), was living in Germany, in Saxony, in such and such a town; and that Leib Fishman, and Malka, his wife, were both buried in the town of Levin, near Leitmeritz, in Bohemia. Just when Father had finished reading this brief official communication, Russian shells began to screech across to the Austrian positions. The order was given to attack. The letter lay next to his heart, from which the continuous cry went up: "No! No! No! . . ." but his legs set themselves obediently in motion in the direction from which death was sending a hail of flying, leaden missiles against defenseless human bodies.

But it was only a short passage at arms. The diabolical din died down, the olive-drab infantry on the other side did not co-operate properly, and the Austrians were swept back.

When Yossel asked for a furlough it was immediately granted. He sped away from the front-line position, he sped to the rear, into the hinterland, but he could not get away from the war, for that was impossible.

The bushes and the grass tops trembled. The soldier carried his rifle, he carried his pack, he boarded a train and sat down in a corner. In this corner he traveled toward Germany, to Saxony, to such and such a town.

Private Fishman had received ten days' furlough.

At the townlet of Levin, on the Leitmeritz-Teschen road, in Bohemia, he descended from the train, sought out the grave of his parents, and said the prayer for the dead.

Then he sat again in the train.

Something extraordinary was happening within him. Suddenly his dead parents, the war, his uniform, were as if they had never been, they had vanished from his thoughts. He traveled as a man would travel who had not seen his wife and children for a long, long time, who had sought them long and at last found them. He forgot; he thought himself into a condition which in reality did not exist. He began all over again in Copenhagen, as if he were just coming from the harbor, where the ship which had brought him from America still lifted its funnels into the Danish sky.

He spoke comfortingly to himself: "The only thing that matters is, we've found each other again. We'll have to make a fresh start. What's the harm in it if the house is without furniture at first? We don't need a bell on the door, or pictures on the wall; only the people matter. Soon I'll be working again in America, and my Leah will buy furniture, pictures, a bell, a mirror, everything, bit by bit."

Thus he pictured his new life to himself. Then suddenly it occurred to him again that he was a soldier, and was only on furlough. That they wouldn't suddenly call off the war for his sake and Leah's, like an inn shutting shop at midnight because the people have to go home some time.

The Wide-Open Gate

ON that day in November 1915, Hermann and I were all alone in the garret when heavy, hesitant footsteps came up the narrow stairway. We heard this strange approach and began to be afraid. Every other instant the footsteps halted, at last they were before our room. There came clearly to my ears a sobbing, almost a rattling in the throat, from the other side of the closed door. The latch was pressed down, very softly. An unfamiliar voice asked something.

We remained as quiet as mice. Mother had given us strict instructions to open only to a familiar voice. But this voice was utterly unfamiliar. So I did not go to the door. Indeed, the voice outside did not sound like a voice, it was more like a gurgling. Hermann began to cry.

The late afternoon drew on, the shadows became longer and longer. Still the stranger outside went on speaking to us through the locked door in urgent, affectionate tones. Now I distinguished clearly two words: my mother's name and my own. Then there was a third name, a word that seemed somehow to be familiar, yet I did not know where I had heard it before. But otherwise the man's speech was meaningless. I did not open.

At last the voice died into silence. The room had become darker and darker.

Suddenly I awoke. Had I been asleep? Hermann lay stretched on the bed, in his clothes and shoes. Outside I heard someone weeping, sobbing. But that was Mother! I sprang to the door, unlocked it, there stood a man, holding my mother in his arms, my shaking, weeping mother.

"Mother!" I cried.

I sprang at the man and tried to push him away.

A miracle happened. The big man at once let go of Mother and turned to me.

"Jacob! Little Jacob!"

What a weeping and sobbing there was! He snatched me up; I had just been so strong and now I was suddenly so weak!

I felt a prickly beard in my face, then I was swimming in the air and being carried into the room. The man who carried me was a soldier, but his uniform was not among those which I already knew.

"Perhaps," I hoped, "perhaps it's a general."

"Jacob! Little Jacob!" The general cried, the general wept, the general kissed. He kissed me, he kissed Mother, who in a choked voice kept asking something, it sounded like "America . . . ?"

"Here's Hermann." I pushed my younger brother into the foreground and introduced him.

"Hirschele!" the soldier cried.

"It's Father," sobbed Mother. "Father . . . a soldier . . ."

She believed he was in New York; he turns up, a soldier.

We children were stupefied, wordless, silent.

Father . . . ?

Mother stood at the table and kneaded flour with milk, she wanted to bake something homey, something out of Strody.

Her hands were weak, and tears rolled secretly down her flushed cheeks, into the dough. A soldier sat by her side, a shapeless uniform, a face as wan as a shadow, shoulders that drooped wearily; and this was Yossel, her husband.

It was thus that they had to meet again, after so many years.

She looked at him with a furtive, sideward glance. She noticed that there were many white streaks in his head and beard.

How old is he actually? . . .

Terrified, she made the reckoning under her breath. Her heart contracted with pain. Thirty years—that was the highest she could grant.

In a corner near the window we children were playing with Father's gun and pack. I explained to Hermann that Father was a general, and that was why he had on a general's uniform.

"Is a general more than a private?" asked Hermann.

"He's twice as much," I said, I, the older and wiser Jacob.

Mother could not rejoice.

She tried to do it, desperately. This reunion merited it, but she could not achieve it. She was already thinking of the morrow. He was a soldier. Why had he become a soldier? She did not want it! Was it for this that she had waited, suffered, hoped? She kneaded her "No" into the thickening yellow dough.

Over and over again we children heard the same question: "Why didn't you remain in America . . . ?"

Of course she was glad that he had come because of us. And yet she could not understand it. Her fear of the something which she did not yet know, but suspected, was stronger than everything else.

Terror ate horribly into her heart. Her husband was wearing a uniform. It meant that he was condemned to return. There could be no doubt about it. He had to go back to the war, to the

war which she knew because she had only just run away from it. The fact that he had not yet mentioned his departure only confirmed her fear.

She passed her fingers, white with flour, across her face. She could contain herself no more, the long accumulations of pain broke through, her shoulders shook convulsively, as in a fit. Only once had I seen her weep thus, on that day in 1914 when we fled from the ladder-wagon into the peasant hut.

Such was their reunion. . . .

The first three days passed, and during these days Mother ran about in a fever. Her heart throbbed stronger and faster at Father's side. There was in her voice the premonition of the coming frenzy. Always the question: "We've met again—and what now . . . ?"

He began once more to tell her what had brought him away from America, and what had happened to him. The wife tried to persuade herself that she was calmer now. His breath near hers did her good. She felt her husband near her, after all these years. . . .

"Perhaps everything will be all right now," she tried to deceive herself. "He'll stay with me, the two of us will live here with the children, and after the war we'll go together to America. . . ."

Then Father told her the truth, which she had already known without him.

"My furlough is over in another five days."

"No . . . !! " screamed Mother. "No . . . !! I don't want . . . !!!"

That same morning my father had to bring a doctor. My mother lay back on the cushion, her face harrowed by pain. There was a single thought in her head:

"He came because of me, he left America because of me, he's got to stay here, I won't let him go, if I'm sick he won't be able to leave me, I'll be sick, I want him to stay. . . ."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "It's hard to tell what the woman's suffering from. Hard to tell. High fever. But no lung complications. No pleurisy, either."

He washed his handsome, well-kept hands in the little white, enamel dish. He made a great to-do, shrugged his shoulders again. My mother asked him wistfully:

"Doctor, will they make him go back even if—I'm sick?"

The doctor smiled equivocally and left.

We children could only play very quietly with the gun and the pack. Sometimes the gun fell down.

"The children can't help that," said my mother angrily from the cushion. "It's the gun's fault."

Father was ashamed. In such moments he almost felt that he was to blame for the whole war.

He brought the medicines. All day long and all night long he sat by her and held her hand. He spoke no word about the war, he spoke only of America, he told her about New York, about Sally Seltzer, about the Kishinev hunchback, about the Lemberg Lodge. . . .

"That's where we'll all go, together," he said.

Mother smiled incredulously, almost cunningly.

"What is she thinking about?" Father tormented himself. He told her about the big, wide streets "over there," streets three times as wide as the market-place in Strody.

Mother let him tell on, she kept her eyes closed and thought her leaden thoughts. . . . "Will I stay sick? . . . Do I actually want to stay sick? . . . And if I do want to stay sick—why do I want it? . . . So that he'll stay with me? . . . But can he stay with me? . . . Can a soldier stay home? . . . Perhaps . . .

if I'm very, very sick . . . I'll pray to God that everything may come out right. . . . I'll pray that Yossel can stay with me and that afterwards I may get better. . . . How can God not want him to remain, if I'm sick? . . ."

There were unhappy thoughts which awakened unrest in her:

"Am I really very sick? . . . Or do I only want to be? . . . The doctor keeps shrugging his shoulders, yet he keeps talking of high fever. . . . Am I really very sick? . . ."

When she put these questions to herself, she felt everything inside turn cold and hollow.

In the second night of her sickness her pains became intolerable. At four in the morning Father had to fetch the doctor to give her some injections to quiet her. When the doctor arrived, and saw the woman, he was startled. He said she seemed to have taken a turn for the worse.

"There's a definite swelling now," he said, outside on the steps. "Did anything happen to excite your wife in the last few days?"

Mother was dreaming: "If I stay sick, he'll stay here. . . ."

The gun fell over. . . .

That day the doctor came several times.

"It seems the swelling has filled with blood. It would be best to operate."

"No, I won't," breathed Mother, and would not let go of Father's hand.

"You won't go back. . . ."

The next morning Father was called outside, onto the stairs, by the doctor.

"Listen, man, you'll have to be strong. You're a soldier. Your wife is a sick woman, a very sick woman."

"I am a soldier," thought Father, and sat down weakly on Mother's bed.

The doctor said to our landlady: "She must be having awful pains, that Jewish woman. She's a plucky little creature. She must be very strong if she can lie there so quietly. Let's hope it won't go too slowly with her. There's hardly anything to be done. . . ."

Mother could not eat any more, her stomach refused to hold anything, it brought everything up.

She had to swallow ice. Her thin, bluish lips became distorted, her teeth hurt her, the ice was so cold.

"Another two days and my furlough's over," Father reckoned, uncomprehendingly.

The doctor was powerless to do anything. Nothing interested Mother any more. She did not even listen when someone spoke to her. But her thoughts still worked, and only round one idea:

"If I'm sick, he'll stay here. . . ."

(A human being should not play with his life. It can come to pass that he loses all mastery over himself, he slips out of his own hands.)

The night before the last. The oil lamp, turned up strongly, flickered yellow and pale. Mother lay there like a breath of mist, her face all bloodless. Her cheekbones showed clearly through the thin skin, and then suddenly her fever came upon her and shook her from head to foot.

Father tried to hold her down. We children were awakened, and we gazed in terror on the woman who was our mother and who was trying to cry out. But she no longer had the strength for it.

Mother whimpered:

"Police Lieutenant Solovkin is the murderer. . . . Mother, run quickly . . . run . . . on the Nuyzhi Square . . . Kishinev . . ."

Mother whimpered:

"War . . . stay here . . . Yossel . . . must go . . ."

She breathed:

"Under the wagon . . . children . . . hide . . . hide the children, Yossel . . ."

Father's face was paler even than that of our sick mother. His beard hung down in a little point and his eyes were rimmed with red from his long vigils. We held on with our hands to the iron bars of the borrowed bed. We stared in amazement at the sunken thing that was our mother, and we understood nothing. We were afraid.

Dawn was breaking when Father fell asleep at last. But Mother awoke to one last glimpse of full consciousness, her eyes were horribly empty as she stared around her. The two folds which started from her chin and went up as far as her frantically staring eyes now deepened, till they became like two open graves. Knowledge and terror sat on the withered face. She knew that soon she would be torn forever from Yossel and the children, for already it was as though she were looking down from ABOVE upon her life.

In the last hours it looked as though her condition had improved. For the first time her stomach retained the food that Father poured down her throat. Father already saw hope, but the doctor (and Mother herself) understood that her stomach was already dead.

Mother suddenly asked to have her bed shifted against the other wall, then she lost consciousness again.

And there she lay on the bed which was to become her death-bed, and no one could have known that she had once been

young and beautiful. Her eyes were like two deep wells, in which mysterious waters were mirrored.

Toward evening she awoke again, she sent Father and Hermann from the room, only I was allowed to remain. She said to me:

"He came back from America for my sake, he shouldn't have done it, do you hear? . . ."

I nodded.

"Now I'm going away for him, to another America, do you hear?"

I nodded.

"Be obedient to your father, you and Hirsch. . . ."

I thought: "She means Hermann . . ." and nodded.

"Be more obedient to him than you were to me. . . ."

I sobbed, nodded.

Suddenly she began to heap reproaches on me. Mother had often scolded me, but this time it was something quite different, a queer scolding, an unkind scolding which hurt, as if she were beating me. Her spirit was unnaturally clear, it was thinner than glass. It turned upon itself. Twice in the last week, she reproached me, I had refused to obey her. Once I had to bring lemons, the second time salt, and both times I had not gone at once, and she had first had to speak sharply to me. With this she reproached me now. She spoke almost hatefully, with an utterly unfamiliar voice. I began to be afraid. At the end she breathed, all finished and exhausted:

"And if I die now . . . you won't have it so easy. . . . What will you do now? . . ."

I stood trembling near the bed and understood little of what Mother wanted. I misunderstood even the last question. I turned toward the table, on which my exercise books lay:

"My arithmetic homework," I assured her in a clear voice.

But she did not hear me any more. She was already dead. I was still holding her hand. I looked for the first time in my life on a dead person. Those I had seen on our flight, those who had been shot and those who had been hanged, had not been dead people for me. Her extinguished gaze, steeped in a questioning sorrow, had, in spite of everything, retained a light, subdued smile.

Father burst into the room. Wailing, he threw himself across the bed. Other people came, the room was suddenly filled with strangers who wept, shouted, gesticulated. By the wall, on her bed, lay my smiling mother.

We, the little Fishmans, stood in the middle of the room, leaning against the edge of the table. We still knew little of life and of dying, but since everyone was crying we understood that this day was in some manner an important day. I was all of eight years old. Weeping, I turned to my schoolwork. Someone told me that on this day I did not have to do my schoolwork. I was glad. When, in school, we celebrated a victory, we also did not have to do any homework.

"But I have to go to school tomorrow," I sobbed.

Someone told me that the next day I would not have to go to school either.

I was still happier. "Just like a Hindenburg celebration," I thought.

Still crying, I began to pack away my textbooks and exercise books. Last came my penholder, my pencil, the eraser, one side for lead, the other for ink.

Mother was dead.

Yossel Fishman, the widower, ran wailing round the table. He struggled for breath, he struggled to retain his understanding, but he struggled in vain; his thoughts collapsed with him,

the stream of his brain was dry, his military coat was wide open, contrary to all regulations.

It was a marvelously beautiful autumn day when they shoved a coffin out of the garret. The coffin was not very heavy.

The road along which the hearse went was horribly long—like an eternal sorrow. It ended with the Jewish cemetery and its wide gate, the only one that stood wide open on this mournful road.

Once there was a little girl in Kishinev. She did not find much happiness in that town. So she went to Strody and became the wife of a good man and the mother of two boys. But the road that led to Strody did not lead to happiness either. She was dead before she found it.

A girl, a woman, a mother—that had all been once upon a time. In the coffin lay a corpse. When they laid her out for the washing, they had to undo the purse which she had kept hanging from her neck. In this purse they found the tattered ship's tickets.

Father no longer had a wife, we no longer had a mother. Her death came so suddenly, so improbably, that everything in me revolted against accepting it as a "natural death."

I looked at my father, who was crying like a little child. He would begin a sentence and then immediately fall silent again. He began to shout, to wail, to make accusations against the doctor:

"Why didn't he tell me the whole truth? Perhaps we could still have saved her!"

When he bethought himself that the doctor had really concealed nothing from him, he fell back again into a state of unconsolability, of childlike tears.

Others had taken care for him of the complicated formalities in connection with the Austro-Hungarian army. Two days before the date set for his departure, his furlough was extended by an extra three days. The telegram which conveyed this information was curt and clear, leaving no room for misunderstanding: "Only three days, until noon, November —th."

Father had to go from the cemetery to the front.

The coffin stood in the little chapel. It was a long, simple coffin, without adornments; it rested on two black stools.

We, the sons of the dead woman, wept.

All the women who were in the room wept.

But the widower did not weep. He sat in full uniform and refused silently to put his gun down.

The Rabbi said the prayer.

Then four men lifted the coffin.

I was told to help in the carrying, for so the law ordained.

Frightened, reluctant, I touched the long coffin.

Father did the same thing, walking side by side with us, his gun on his shoulder, his pack strapped on, his coat fastened.

The grave-diggers came out of the grave; they were two old men. Although it was cold now, a sharp autumn wind whistling round the gray stones, they had been working in their shirt-sleeves.

I noticed, above the grave, two thick ropes. I did not fail to deduce that the coffin would be slid down with these ropes.

Eleven men, eighteen women, and two children stood around the open grave. They were the last escort of the dead woman.

Standing motionless, Father said the prayer for the dead; through it he stared blindly at the coffin-lid.

Since Hermann and I could not read the prayer, because a thick mist of tears had gathered in our eyes, the soldier repeated

the prayer, word for word, in a hard clear voice, and we, sobbing, said the words after him.

Then the first sods fell into the grave. They fell dully, with a hollow sound. I uttered a cry.

The law ordains that the survivors must, at the open grave, tear their clothes in sign of mourning.

Each one of us had a button-hole cut open for him with a knife. With us children it was a button-hole in our dark blue navy suits, with Father it was the second button-hole in his gray—once almost light blue—military coat, the second button-hole from the top.

The Rabbi, the men, the women—all went home.

But Father marched to the train.

He pressed us children once more to him. His face was still without expression or motion, but it was not so with his heart. He went off to the Austro-Russian front of the great war.

We children were put into a "home."

What followed was a youth filled with passionate dreams of a homeland, of taking root, of friends, of an unreplaceable mother. . . . They were the Jewish dreams of a Jewish boyhood. . . . How I longed and implored my way through to all this, how I struggled—and how I was betrayed!

But that is a story by itself.

